ALL FOR LOVE

REV

J. J. MORIARTY.

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OR

From the Manger to the Cross

BY THE

REV. JAMES J. MORIARTY

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"Having loved his own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end."—JOHN, xiii. 1.

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TO THE

Adorable Heart of Jesus,

SOURCE OF ALL LIGHT, ALL GRACE, ALL LOVE,

THIS BOOK

IS

REVERENTLY DEDICATED

WITH THE

HOPE AND PRAYER

THAT

HIS BLESSINGS MAY BE SO POURED OVER ITS PAGES

AS

TO BRING FORTH IN THE SOULS OF ITS READERS

FRUIT ABOUNDING UNTO LIFE ETERNAL.

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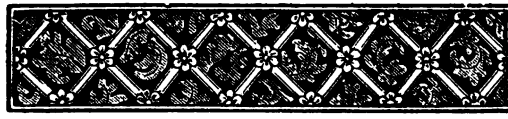


PREFACE.

WHY this book? As some persons may naturally ask the question, it is no more than proper that I should here give the answer. It is, doubtless, true that a large number of works, of all sizes and of almost every conceivable style, many of them far deeper and more learned than I could ever expect to write, have been devoted to the consideration of the same subject herein selected and discussed. Yet it is my humble opinion that too many books cannot be written on such a Life as that of our great Model. For, in the first place, the subject is in itself inexhaustible; secondly, no two authors treat it in exactly the same manner or from the same standpoint; and, thirdly, every writer, no matter howsoever

humble, has his own little circle of patient, kindly-disposed readers, to some at least of whom his simple reflections on such a sublime theme may be the source of a few pious thoughts, the medium of some spiritual profit.

The majority of readers do not seek, in fact do not relish, very deep or learned treatises, but are content with whatever brings home to their minds and hearts, in clear, simple, yet reverent language, the great truths of Christ's Gospel, the amiable and lovely traits of that Divine character which open unto us a vision of God's infinite goodness and mercy, revealed to us so clearly in the Sacred Heart of the world's Adorable Redeemer.

The writer has nothing new or startling to offer, but a few meditations, brought forth in the calm retreat of a quiet country parish, on the life and character of that grand central figure of the universe—Jesus Christ, true God, and perfect man.

Knowing full well that "the searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed with glory," I have therefore refrained from doing anything more than merely attempting to give some faint glimpses of that wondrous Life, some prominent

traits of that Divine character which shed such lustre on this bleak world, and brought such hope to suffering humanity as to lift it up for ever beyond the possibility of dark despair.

This is a study worthy of man's deepest thought and reflection, combining as it does all that is beautiful, touching, and instructive. What epic that has ever been composed can compare with it in lofty grandeur? what tragedy with the intensity of its appealing woes? what graphic history or thrilling story can rival in ever-deepening interest the narration of that Life, no matter how simply told, which unfolds new beauties, displays richer charms, strikes deeper chords in the human heart, the oftener we study it, and the more faithfully we strive to realise all its strength and all its sweetness?

We shall first take a general view of Christ's human nature, then of his divine, listen to the pleadings of the Infant Jesus from the manger, strive to penetrate the veil of his hidden life, glance at his public work and manifestation, watch Him unfolding his mission to the world, behold Him instituting the Sacrament of his love, and walk in his footsteps up Calvary's mount, where we may rest and ponder on the

lessons there taught us by Him who is "the Way, the Truth, the Life."

Instructed as we are by Sacred Writ that not even a glass of cold water given in his name shall go without its reward, in the power and sweetness of that name, at the mention of which every knee that is in heaven, on earth, and in hell must bend, I send forth this modest, unpretentious little book, on its mission of kindness and goodwill to all men, embraced as they all are in the boundless charity of Jesus Christ.

J. J. M.

St. Patrick's Church, Chatham, N.Y.,
Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus,
January 15, 1882.

ALL FOR LOVE.

The Son of Man.

THE life of Christ is so full of wonders that it has wherewith to charm the minds of all mortals, no matter what their station, their dispositions, or their capabilities. It has as many-sided aspects as there are individuals to consider it. The learned view it in one way, the unlearned in another; yet for all it has its influence, and for all it has its lesson. It is so infinitely rich in all that is precious in thought and feeling that no two men ever considered it from absolutely the same point of view, or ever treated it precisely in the same manner.

It is the richest mine in the universe, and what is more, it can never be exhausted. Nor does it belong to one company or corporation, for it is the common property of the human race. Each man can enter on the field of exploration and investigation without fear of encroaching upon the territory of another. It is deep enough, high enough, broad enough, and long enough to satisfy all.

What is required is for each miner to enter upon his work with the credentials of earnestness and good faith, with a calm mind disposed for meditation, a prayerful industry, and a sincere desire to extract from the precious ore of God's Word what is needful for the spiritual enlightenment and refreshment of his immortal soul.

This sacred life has different attractions for different souls. Some are entirely absorbed with the sweet mysteries of the birth and infancy, some with his childhood, his boyhood, others again with his veiled life at Nazareth, or with the sorrows of Gethsemani and Calvary.

Yet above and beyond all these the most striking to many is the fact of the Incarnation itself—the wonderful condescension of God in

humbling Himself so much as to become man; to be as one of us, a poor, frail mortal, a worm of the earth. All mystery seems to reach here its absolute climax. That the All-Powerful Creator of all things, the supreme, infinite, self-existent, absolutely independent Master of the universe, should deign to clothe Himself with our humanity is sufficient, and more than sufficient, to feed and hold entranced in loving adoration the intelligence of a seraph during the never-ending ages of eternity.

There have been and there are men whose aspirations are of so high and holy an order that they feel humbled at the thought of the inferior part of their nature—the burden of the flesh which they are obliged to carry, its low desires and inclinations, its frequent and troublesome necessities. Their spirit almost rebels at the needs of their body, the time that has to be devoted to it, and the care that has to be expended in supplying its demands for food and clothing, rest and recreation. Thus have the holy ones of God always felt, and with insatiable longing have they desired, like St. Paul, to be freed from the body of this death.

If mortals, like ourselves, feel so deeply the

humiliation of our lower nature, who, then, of all created beings can possibly conceive what an infinite condescension it must have been on the part of the Almighty One to descend to our low estate, to assume our flesh and blood, and a human soul—in one word, to become man? God Himself alone can fully, adequately conceive how infinitely He had to lower Himself in order to place Himself on an equality with us as to our human nature. No wonder St. Paul declared that the Lord "humbled Himself"—*exinanivit;* that is, made Himself cheap, of no account, emptied Himself of all glory, as the original expression would lead us to understand.

According to the true Christian faith, the belief of ages, Jesus Christ is perfect man as well as true God. There were heretics in former times who denied that Christ was really man, composed of a body and soul like unto ours; as there are heretics in the present day who, on the other hand, believe in his humanity but yet deny his divinity.

We shall first, then, consider Him as man, perfect man, and meditate on the human side of Christ's character: that side which brings Him so near and makes Him so dear to us: "the

Son of Man," that sweet, lowly, familiar title, chosen by Himself, which sinks deep into our human hearts and encourages us to call Him Brother and to call Him Friend.

As it behoved Him in all things to be made like to his brethren, Jesus was perfect man, having a body and rational soul like ours, and "in shape found as a man." He did not merely assume an appearance, but took flesh and blood, and was in all things as we are, "excepting sin." There are two natures in Christ—the divine and the human—distinct, unconfused, yet united; there are also two wills—the human and the divine—by no means antagonistic the one to the other. These two natures and two wills are combined in the most harmonious relations in one personality, and that personality the Divine Word made flesh, Christ Jesus our Lord. As St. Augustine declares: "He so joined created nature to Himself that from the three—the Word, the soul, and the flesh—but one person is formed: *Naturam creatam sic sibi conjunxit, ut una persona fiat ex tribus, Verbo, animâ, et carne.*"

Being then truly man, He had the same human feelings and affections as we, and was

clothed with our weakness and infirmities; for God "sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," that He might condemn "sin in the flesh."*

The grandest, noblest, holiest, and most perfect work that ever came forth from the creative power of the Adorable Trinity was the human soul of Jesus Christ. "Every good and perfect gift coming from the Father of lights" that it is possible for a created being to receive and contain was showered in most generous superabundance on Christ's human soul. All virtue and grace of the highest conceivable order, supreme wisdom and intelligence, knowledge and love, incomparably superior to the faculties of the highest and brightest of the cherubim and seraphim, filled his soul from the very first moment of its existence; and yet, with all this, how tenderly human is his character!

All those affections which we cherish so much here below not only were not absent, but shone forth in Him with a deeper, a purer, a more resplendent light, that casts its cheering gleam

* Rom. viii. 3.

across the distance of ages, waxing stronger and brigher as the world grows older and colder.

Christ loved his country and its people, his Virgin Mother and his foster-father, his blood relations James and John, his apostles, disciples, special friends, and intimates.

How deeply He loved his country and his chosen race; how He sighed in spirit over its fall from former greatness, its desolation, its bondage under the rule of one who was a stranger to its people, and still more a stranger to their religion! He mourned over the decadence of their ancient glories, and still more for the estrangement of so many amongst them from the God of their fathers. He grieved still more deeply when, with his prophetic eye, He scanned the future and saw the most terrible of all crimes which they were soon to commit, and the mighty judgment of wrath which was to fall upon them in consequence. How sad and melancholy He appeared to his disciples when, taking his stand on a lofty hill overlooking Jerusalem and its gorgeous Temple, in heart-breaking accents He foretold the destruction soon to come, in the very near future,

on that devoted city and all it held most precious! Was there ever a more touching, a more tender, or plaintive wail than that uttered by the Saviour over the doomed yet once favoured city: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not?" And then, with a sadness and a sorrow no human mind could fathom, He foretells the coming destruction in these words: "Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate."* Being the lineal descendant of King David, "according to the flesh," He loved his people with a right royal love; and from his noble heart there welled up a patriotism which gave a holy sanction for ever afterwards to all that men should do and brave for home and fatherland.

Jesus loved his home, his happy home at Nazareth, a village embosomed in an amphitheatre of noble hills, "like the petals of an opening rose," as St. Jerome beautifully described it, where He inhaled at every breath that

* Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.

fresh mountain air which, according to all travellers in the Holy Land, makes the inhabitants of that town more healthy and comely than those of any other district in Palestine. He loved its charming green fields, enamelled with every variety of flower; and often, no doubt, He listened in childhood's sunny hours to the lark, the nightingale, and the blackbird, which, with many other varieties of the feathered tribe, made the surrounding hills melodious with their song. It was there He sweetly pondered on those homely lessons of Divine Providence which He afterwards expounded with so much force and beauty to the multitudes that lined the slopes of the mount from which He spoke as never man spoke before or since: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these."* He admired the

* Matt. vi. 26-29.

picturesque scenery of his own native land, the varied beauties of this lower creation, the sky, and sun, and starry firmament; and He wished that all men should follow his example, and raise themselves from the contemplation of nature to the bountifulness of nature's God.

Christ loved his disciples. With the exception of his own Mother Mary, and foster-father Joseph, there was no one dearer to his heart than St. John. The deepest intimacy existed between them—an intimacy which, no doubt, sprang from the tender, loving character, and still more from the spotless purity of body and soul, of this cherished follower.

St. John alone rejoiced in that most singular privilege of resting his head on the bosom of his Master at the Last Supper, the feast of the Redeemer's love. He, with Peter and James, were the chosen three who were permitted to gaze upon their transfigured Lord as He appeared on Mount Thabor, when "his face did shine as the sun and his garments became white as snow." It was to St. John that the Saviour committed the care of her who was his dearest treasure upon earth before sighing

forth his agonising soul into the bosom of his Eternal Father: "When Jesus, therefore, had seen his Mother and the disciple standing, whom He loved, He saith to his Mother: 'Woman, behold thy son.' After that, He saith to the disciple: 'Behold thy mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own."*

If our Blessed Saviour had such deep affection for his "beloved disciple" (the name by which St. John has always since been known), who can possibly conceive the immense, unfathomable depths of that most intense love which He had, even while on earth, for that incomparable being who rejoiced in the most glorious of appellations, the Mother of Jesus? How tenderly He loved her in whose womb, as in his chosen temple, He lay concealed during nine long months, on whose lovely face his infant eyes first rested, into whose beaming countenance He looked with that ineffable look of more than human tenderness, from whose breast He drew his nourishment, and at the same time imbibed all his human sympathies!

* John, xix. 26, 27.

How often He nestled in her bosom, and the closer she drew to her her Childthe nearer she approached her God! Keble, the author of the *Christian Year*, though not of our faith, yet with true Catholic instinct thus gives expression to a like thought, in his own tender, thoughtful strains:—

> "Ave Maria! Mother blest!
> To whom, caressing and caress'd,
> Clings th' Eternal Child;
> Favour'd beyond archangel's dream,
> When first on thee with tenderest gleam
> Thy new-born Saviour smil'd.
> Ave Maria! Thou whose name
> All but adoring love may claim,
> Yet may we reach thy shrine;
> For He, thy Son and Saviour, vows
> To crown all lofty, lowly brows
> With love and joy like thine."

Particular affection had He also for St. Peter, whose strong faith in Him as the "Messias" and "Son of God" outshone that of the other disciples: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Rewarding St. Peter, even here below, for his grand open

declaration of faith, He established him the Rock upon which He was to build his Church, against which not even the "gates of hell" were ever to prevail.

Outside of the apostolic band there was one family with whom the Saviour of men was on the most intimate terms of friendship—more so, as far as we can learn from Sacred Writ, than with any other household on earth. This family was composed of a brother and two sisters—Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Their home was always a welcome retreat for Christ whenever He was in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem; for it was situated in the little village of Bethany, but a few miles to the south-east of the Holy City. Thither He often bent his weary steps, after the fatigue of the day, when He desired to obtain a little respite from the noise and turmoil of the city and to escape from the pressure of the multitude that everywhere hung upon his words.

There the ever-busy Martha waited upon Him with every demonstration of kindness and attention, whilst the contemplative Mary nestled near his sacred feet, drinking in with all-absorbing reverence those words of more than

human wisdom that fell from the lips of the Master:

"And fast beside the olive-bordered way
Stands the bless'd home where Jesus deigned to stay—
The peaceful home, to zeal sincere
And heavenly contemplation dear,
Where Martha loved to wait with reverence meet,
And wiser Mary lingered at thy sacred feet."

How tenderly Jesus loved that privileged little family can clearly be seen from the charming and deeply-moving narrative, to be found in the Gospel of St. John, relating to us the circumstances attending the death and resurrection of Lazarus. It is one of the most beautiful and touching scenes in the life of Christ, depicted for us in tender, soul-stirring language by the Apostle of Love:

"Now there was a certain man sick named Lazarus, of Bethania, of the town of Mary and of Martha her sister. And Mary was she that anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair: whose brother Lazarus was sick. His sisters therefore sent to Him, saying: Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick. And Jesus, hearing it, said to them: This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God,

that the Son of God may be glorified by it. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary and Lazarus. . . . Lazarus our friend sleepeth ; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. His disciples therefore said : Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. But Jesus spoke of his death ; and they thought that He spoke of the repose of sleep. Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly : Lazarus is dead." We perceive that after He received the first message Jesus did not set out for Bethany until the Sabbath after the death of Lazarus, in order that the "Son of God" might be all the more glorified in consequence of the facts of the death and resurrection of Lazarus being attested by a large number of witnesses. When He approached the town, Martha and, after some time, Mary went out to meet Him : "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," was the wail that came forth from the sorrowing hearts of the two sisters. Jesus comforted them with the hope of immortality : "Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to Him : I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her : I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, although

he be dead, shall live: and every one that liveth, and believeth in me, shall not die for ever. Believest thou this? She saith to Him: Yea, Lord, I have believed that Thou art Christ the Son of the living God, who art come into this world." As a reward for this beautiful, this strong faith, as a proof to the world that He was in truth the "Son of God," and as a special mark of His sincere affection for those special friends, He bade the man, who was four days mouldering in the tomb, to arise and to come forth from the region of the shadow of death: "Lazarus, come forth. And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding-bands, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them: Loose him and let him go."* The love of Jesus for his friends was hereby shown to be stronger than death, and to have robbed the grave itself of victory. If our Blessed Lord has done so much upon earth to manifest his love for his own, who can conceive the joys untold and blessings innumerable He has stored up in the "many mansions" of his Father's

* John, xi. 1-44.

House for those who are destined to bask in the eternal sunshine of his friendship hereafter?

Jesus not only condescended to the lowliness of our human affections, but also stooped to the very infirmities of our nature. Not only after his long fast of forty days and forty nights, but also on many other occasions, He felt the pangs of hunger, the cravings of thirst, the weariness of labour and fatigue. "And He eat nothing in those days; and when they were ended He was hungry."* "Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well."†

Being "a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, He hath borne our griefs," and therefore He knows how to sympathise with us in all our labours, hardships, and weaknesses. "We have not a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities," for He Himself drank of the cup of human bitterness to its very lowest dregs. He suffered from anguish, fear, and desolation, and He Himself solemnly declared that his soul was sorrowful unto death.

Having chosen poverty for his portion, He

* Matt. iv. 2. † John, iv. 6.

had to suffer its many inconveniences and privations, and "had not whereon to lay his head." He sought for none of the luxuries, and was often in want of the necessaries, of life. He selected by preference an obscure station—not in the midst of a bustling city, but in a quiet, lonely, retired country town of a despised Galilean province, where He lived for nigh thirty years, unknown to the world, a life of solitude, prayer, and humble, honest, manly toil. His heart was ever open to the appeal of the poor or to the cry of the oppressed. The afflicted and the unfortunate had special claims on his mercy, and He sympathised with them in their sorrows, He bore their griefs, and with most loving kindness, as well as with unrestrained power, He alleviated their distress, cured their ailments, and cheered their drooping souls.

Tenderness was a marked trait of his character—a deep, soothing, measureless depth of tenderness that healed the wounds of the human heart and dispelled all clouds of sorrow from the soul. He was never known to laugh, but it is certain that He wept. He wept over Jerusalem and the terrible fate that awaited it; He wept at the grave of Lazarus, his friend; and

those tears of Christ have since tempered every Christian's sorrow, and have given to every human grief the sanction of his sympathy, for "we mourn not as those who have no hope." In his appearance—from all traditional accounts—He was the personification of dignity, grave, majestic, of sweet, condescending manners, measured speech, lofty tone, penetrating yet kindly glance, and noble gait. As the prophet of old described Him: "*Speciosus præ filiis hominum*"—"He was beautiful beyond all the children of men."

"I shall describe," says Nicephorus, an historian of the fifteenth century, "the appearance of our Lord as handed down to us from antiquity. He was very beautiful. His height was fully seven spans; his hair bright auburn, and not too thick, and was inclined to wave in short curls. His eyebrows were black and arched, and his eyes seemed to shed from them a gentle, golden light. They were very beautiful. His nose was prominent; his beard lovely, but not very long. He wore his hair, on the contrary, very long, for no scissors had touched it, nor any human hand except that of his Mother, when she played with it in his child-

hood. He stooped a little, but his body was well formed. His complexion was that of the ripe brown wheat, and his face, like his Mother's, oval rather than round, with only a little red in it, but through it there shone dignity, intelligence of soul, gentleness, and a calmness of spirit never disturbed. Altogether He was very like his divine and immaculate Mother." This description, coming from a writer in the East, does not vary much from that given in the supposititious letter of Lentulus to the Roman Senate. Whatever, then, may have been the attractions of his personal appearance, much stronger were those of his lovely disposition. Meekness was a most striking characteristic of Jesus: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart."* Isaias the prophet clearly foretold that this would be one of the most shining qualities of the Messias, who, in his character as man, became the "servant" of God: "Behold my servant, I will uphold Him: my elect, my soul delighteth in Him: I have given my spirit upon Him, He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry,

* Matt. xi. 29.

nor have respect to person, neither shall his voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not be sad nor troublesome, till He set judgment in the earth: and the islands shall wait for his law. Thus saith the Lord God that created the heavens, and stretched them out: that established the earth, and the things that spring out of it: that giveth breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that tread thereon. I, the Lord, have called Thee in justice, and taken Thee by the hand, and preserved Thee. And I have given Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles. That Thou mightest open the eyes of the blind, and bring forth the prisoner out of prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."*

"The bruised reed He would not break." Although possessing power without limit, He never exercised it to coerce the human will, which, as God, He had created free. His enemies He could have crushed at any moment, had He so

* Isaias, xlii. 1-7.

desired; but He wished it not. If, by the sublimity of his teaching, the force of his most powerful example, the constant manifestation of his goodness, He could not obtain access to the heart of his hearers, He freely permitted them to accept or reject his offer of mercy and salvation, and let them abide by the eternal consequences. When cast out of the synagogue of his own town He uttered no complaint. When refused hospitality by the inhabitants of a certain city in Samaria, his disciples were anxious for vengeance upon them: "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? And turning, He rebuked them, saying: You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls but to save."*

Such was the spirit of Christ, and such is the spirit with which He wished all his disciples to be animated—one of kindness, charity, and good-will towards all men—the spirit of Him "who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust;" who wished not to have the "cockle,"

* Luke, ix. 54-57.

uprooted, lest the good wheat might be plucked up with it, but let both remain until the time of harvest.

His was the spirit farthest possibly removed from one of cruel intolerance and persecution which would pursue fellow-beings even unto death on account of religious differences. There is nothing sadder, nothing more deplorable to be found in the history of the human race than the accounts of such a condemnable course of action, no matter on whom the responsibility rests. Well might the words of the Saviour of men be applied to all guilty of unchristian conduct: "Ye know not of what spirit ye are."

"God will not have a forced homage," says St. Hilary, Doctor of the Church. "What need has He of a profession of faith produced by violence? We must not attempt to deceive Him; He must be sought with simplicity, served by charity, honoured and gained by the honest exercise of our free-will."

The "broken reeds" of society—the sinful and the fallen—Christ repelled not from Him, but, on the contrary, sought them out and attracted them to Himself with all the greater

care and tenderness: "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick. Go, then, and learn what this meaneth: I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners."*

He came not to break but to heal the bruised heart and to pour the oil of charity into gaping wounds, like the Good Samaritan of whom He spoke so beautifully.

"The smoking flax He did not quench." Passions that were burning themselves out in sinful excess He quenched not, but turned the flame in another direction, made them passions in a nobler cause, purified love and transformed zeal, so that the whole world might easily see the change that his Spirit had wrought.

"Nothing can be more beautifully consistent," says the late Cardinal Wiseman, "than the character of our Saviour. And yet what forms its principal and distinguishing peculiarity is the superhuman manner in which traits of the most opposite nature, and apparently of the most unharmonising qualities, blend together in such just proportion as to make one perfect

* Matt. ix. 12, 13.

and consistent whole. In Him we have an independence, which renders Him superior to all the world, yet a humility which subjects Him to the meanest of its inhabitants; an intrepid firmness in reproof, and a nervous eloquence in condemning, which humbles and crushes the most daring, yet a sweetness and gentleness in instructing which encourages and wins the timid and the prejudiced; a fortitude which could support the most excruciating tortures, yet a meekness which could suppress the slightest expression of triumph. There is not one passage in his entire life which refuses to harmonise with the rest, however different it may appear at first sight from his usual conduct; there is no apparent shade in his character which does not beautifully mingle in with its brightest colours. Hence there is not a single transaction of our Lord's upon earth which may not be dwelt upon by the Christian teacher as a lesson of conduct, the most perfect and most instructive; not one where the Christian apologist could not rest to point out to the unbeliever a beauty and a sublimity more than human."*

* Lecture Fourth on the Eucharist.

There was nothing extreme, nothing narrow in his views or conduct, but He always kept the golden mean. Even in his intimate friendships no undue familiarity was ever permitted, in fact was never attempted. He was perfect master of Himself at all times and on all occasions even the most trying. He had the full consciousness of all his powers and of the all-absorbing nature of his mission. He visited publicans and sinners, and presided at their banquets, making Himself in no way singular, in order that He might gain all hearts. No harshness, no bitterness, no impatience ever manifested themselves in his person, and He was severe, and justly severe, only when He encountered hypocrisy and uncovered it before the world. He confounded pride and stooped to the lowly. He counselled the timid, confirmed the wavering, and cheered the despondent. His sympathies, strong, deep, and tender, went out to the widow, the orphan, the poor, the ignorant, and the enslaved.

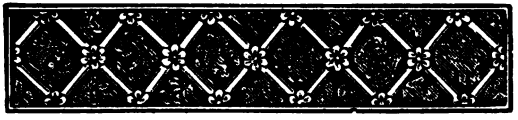
Nor did his sympathy end in mere sentiment, deep as it was, but extended itself so as to lift up, to elevate, to cheer, help, and strengthen for the battle of life.

In all human relations He was the perfect Man, the Model of every virtue, civic and domestic, moral and religious, and the type of all that is grand, holy, and sublime; raising up our frail human nature to a height of glory it could never otherwise possibly attain without the fact of the Incarnation, "for nowhere doth He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham doth He take hold."* As the great St. Augustine said: "*Factus est Deus homo, ut homo fieret Deus*"—"God became man that man might become God." He became partaker of our human nature, that we might partake of his divine. He became our brother in the flesh, that we might become his in the spirit and thus be adopted by his Heavenly Father as truly his sons and co-heirs with Christ of life eternal.

This is but a very faint picture, portrayed in feeble words, of the merely human side of that Character whose features have left a deep, ineffaceable impress on the moral training of all succeeding generations, whose brightness

* Heb. ii. 16.

has illuminated the world, inspiring it with a nobler energy, giving to it a higher purpose, and endowing it with a richer promise of good things to come.



The Son of God.

HAVING thus gazed with wondrous admiration on the human lineaments of the Son of Man, let us now turn with soul-inspiring awe to examine those features of Christ's life and character which as clearly demonstrate his divinity as the former did his sacred humanity.

The entire character of Christ as man, with its unquestionable veracity, its highest sense of honour, its nobility of spirit, and absolute unselfishness, is the surest guarantee that whatever claims He set forth must be founded on a true and solid basis. But He repeatedly,

publicly, and most emphatically claimed that He was the Son of God—equal to the Father and born of Him before all ages. Therefore, if we concede that Christ was man and the most perfect type of manhood—honest, truthful, highly intelligent, and honourable—we must surely accept his own testimony with regard to Himself, more especially since He strengthened that testimony by the most wonderful and oft-repeated exercise of almighty power, such as the world has never since or never before beheld.

Now let us examine the instances in which He claimed, and other instances in which He proved, without shadow of doubt, that He was God.

In those soul-thrilling words of Christ Himself, "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting,"* the nature of the claim He puts forth becomes apparent. Speaking in a similar strain, He declared:† "My Father worketh until now, and I work. Hereupon, therefore,

* John, iii. 16. † Id. v. 17-21.

the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He did not only break the Sabbath, but also said God was his Father, making Himself equal to God. Then Jesus answered, and said to them: Amen, amen, I say unto you, the Son cannot do anything of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing; for what things soever He doth, these the Son also doth in like manner; for the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things which Himself doth; and greater works than these will He show Him, that ye may wonder. For as the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth life, so the Son also giveth life to whom He will." By these words He reiterated his statement, distinctly claiming a divine power—that of giving life to whom He would. The bystanders are generally considered good judges of the meaning intended by the speaker, more especially when he who addresses them is accustomed to none but clear and simple language. Christ clearly perceived how He was understood by the multitude, and it was evidently his wish that they should so understand, otherwise He certainly should have explained his meaning and not permit a large number of people to be left

under a fatal delusion. He still further confirmed this utterance by declaring that even the very dead in the grave should acknowledge its truth: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, that the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."*

He, moreover, declared that he who was speaking to them was at the same time in heaven: "No man hath ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven,"† most assuredly a prerogative no mere mortal could possibly claim. Still more strongly and clearly did He say to the multitude "I and the Father are one," whereupon "the Jews took up stones to stone Him," knowing full well that He thereby professed to be a Divine Being. On another occasion He gave out that solemn, Godlike utterance, "Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am:"‡ that "I am," testified to the world that He knew as God no past nor future, but all was to Him ever present. The same truth shines forth in his prayer to his Eternal Father for his dis-

* John, v. 25. † Id. iii. 13. ‡ Id. viii. 58.

ciples: "Glorify thou me, O Father, with thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee."* He proclaims Himself to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," which no man could possibly do without the most rash presumption; and He exacts of his followers unwavering faith in Him as the true Son of God. "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" He asks of the man born blind whose sight He restored. "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him? And Jesus said to him: Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And He said: I believe, Lord. And falling down, he adored Him."† This adoration Christ should not have permitted were He not really a Divine Being or the true Son of the Most High.

The most solemn as well as the clearest and most explicit declaration of his divinity was uttered by the Saviour during the time of his Passion, when, in the presence of the chief men of the nation, He was solemnly adjured by the high-priest to make Himself and his divinity known: "And the high-priest said to Him: I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell

* John, xvii. 5. † Id. ix. 35-38.

us if Thou be the Christ the Son of God. Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it,"* or, as St. Mark's Gospel gives the answer, "I am. And you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven."† No language could possibly be clearer or more to the point in question that we are now considering.

No doubt, then, can possibly exist in any fair intelligent mind as to the claims which Christ put forward as to his divinity.

The rationalists of the present age freely admit that Christ was a model man, in fact, the most perfect type of manhood, and one whose exemplary life has had an unbounded and never-ceasing influence for good on the whole human race. Admitting all this, and being unable to deny that He declared Himself God, and evidently believed in his own divinity, they take refuge in saying that He laboured under an hallucination. Either one of these two propositions must be true; that is to say, either Christ was deceived or He was a deceiver. There is certainly no middle standing-ground.

* Matt. xxvi. 63-64. † Mark, xiv. 62.

We cannot possibly conceive Him as having been deceived, for no one could esteem *Him* as an ignorant enthusiast, who enlightened the world by the sublimity of his doctrine, who purified the world by his elevated moral code, and who was more than a match for the ablest of Jewish doctors, and sharpest of Jewish lawyers, who were constantly seeking to entrap Him in his speech. The answer which Christ gave when asked whether tribute should be paid to Cæsar or not, should stamp Him for ever as the wisest of men. A simple relation of the fact, as narrated in Scripture, will suffice.

Never, perhaps, was a greater dilemma proposed to man. If Christ answered, without any qualification, that tribute should be paid to Cæsar, He would earn for Himself the animosity of the whole Jewish race, who hated foreign domination, and abhorred the rule of the pagan. Should He answer that tribute should not be paid, then He would be accused of opposition to the law of the land, as an abettor of treason, and an inciter to insurrection. The answer of Christ solved all difficulties, and at the same time gave in epitome the sum of all man's duties, social, political, and religious: "Render,

therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

The Master-Mind that could give such a response was in no danger of delusion from any source. Most assuredly He was not and could not have been deceived; that He was a deceiver none of our opponents dare to admit. Deceivers seek to gain by their deception either riches, pleasures, or honours. But Christ loved poverty during all his earthly life, and He sought only the hearts of men. He desired not the pleasures of the world, but, on the contrary, always practised absolute self-denial; and as for honours, He so utterly despised them that He voluntarily embraced the foulest ignominy.

Consequently there was nothing in this world that Christ, had He been an impostor, could have gained by such deception; and as to the other world, it is all the more certain that no deceit can obtain favour there.

He well knew, as He knew all things, what effects would follow from the proclamation of his divinity—bitter persecution of Himself and his followers, and a cruel, ignominious death—

* Matt. xxii. 21.

yet He hesitated not. He even foretold in clearest language what his disciples as well as Himself would have to undergo in testimony of the divine character of his mission. His words gave forth no uncertain sound. If He abandoned his claim to divinity, a royal throne, the throne of his ancestors in the flesh, was within his reach; yet He spurned that earthly crown: "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews."* So we cannot but perceive that He openly proclaimed Himself equal to the Father and born of Him before all ages. He reiterates and confirms his declarations, and demands even the sacrifice of their lives from his disciples in defence of his cause. No one is to be preferred before Him. They are to undergo the loss of all things the world accounts most precious, even the friendship of those nearest and those dearest, rather than lose his love or betray his cause: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more

* John, xviii. 36.

than me is not worthy of me."* What possible right, if He were not God, could Christ have to the undivided love of all creatures, in preference even to those linked by the closest ties of blood and friendship? God alone has the right to demand it; and if Christ demanded it, then it is another proof that He laid claim to divinity. That his apostles and disciples believed in his claim is evident from the sacred writings of the New Testament, especially from that clearest and most sublime of all the direct inspirations of God ever vouchsafed to a mortal, and which is contained in the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John, which gives us the eternal as well as the temporal generation of the Incarnate God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men: and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. . . . That was the true light, which enlighteneth

* Matt. x. 37.

every man that cometh into this world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto his own, and his own received Him not; but as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name; who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw his glory, the glory, as it were, of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The grand testimony of the great apostle St. Paul to the divinity of Christ is no less clear and emphatic. We find it couched in very strong language in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by his Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the world; who, being the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, making purgation of sins, sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He

hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels hath He said at any time: Thou art my son, to-day have I begotten thee? And again: I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son? And again, when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith: Let all the angels of God adore Him. And to the angels indeed He saith: He that maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But to the Son: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of justice is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And: Thou in the beginning, O Lord, didst found the earth; and the works of thy hands are the heavens. They shall perish, but Thou shalt continue; and they shall all grow old as a garment. And as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the self-same, and thy years shall not fail."

Now let us examine how fully Christ established his claim by his display of almighty power. He said to his enemies: "If ye believe not me, believe my works." *

* John, x. 38.

Christ was bound by the very necessity of his position to prove his claims, otherwise no obligation would rest upon the world to believe in Him; and prove his claims He did by his wonderful miracles and no less wonderful prophecies, to the fulfilment of which profane as well as sacred history bear ample and glorious testimony.

With regard to miracles in general, I see no necessity for going into an argumentation on their *possibility*, for the very good reason that the vast majority of Christians in every age, even in this nineteenth century, believe that miracles have been performed, and that they are as clearly established facts as any others related in history. *Ab actu ad posse valet illatio*—the facts being established, the possibility is surely clear. If human testimony be of any force or value, then there is as much and as reliable testimony in favour of miracles as of any other important events that have ever happened. We have every reason to believe that the miracles of Christ are *facts*, and facts are very stubborn things even for scientists or so-called philosophers to gainsay. We believe that God created this wondrous world by the mere expression of his almighty will; we believe that his providence

still directs and governs the universe He called into being; we believe, likewise, that when in his infinite wisdom He sees fit He is perfectly free to suspend the action of those laws He was the first to put in motion.

As the learned Dr. Johnson one day said to Boswell: "Although God has made nature to operate by certain fixed laws, yet it is not unreasonable to think that He may suspend those laws in order to establish a system highly advantageous to mankind. Now, the Christian religion is a most beneficial system, as it gives us light and certainty where we were before in darkness and doubt. The miracles which prove it are attested by men who had no interest in deceiving us, but who, on the contrary, were told that they should suffer persecution, and did actually lay down their lives in confirmation of the truth of the facts which they asserted. Indeed, for some centuries, the heathens did not pretend to deny the miracles, but said they were performed by the aid of evil spirits. This is a circumstance of great weight. Then, sir, when we take the proofs derived from the prophecies which have been so exactly fulfilled we have most satisfactory evidence. Supposing

a miracle possible—as to which, in my opinion, there can be no doubt—we have a strong evidence for the miracles in support of Christianity, as the nature of the thing admits."

A few days afterwards, returning to this subject, the same great doctor said: "As to the Christian religion, sir, besides the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favour from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth after a serious consideration of the question. Grotius was an acute man, a lawyer, a man accustomed to examine evidence, and he was convinced. Grotius was not a recluse, but a man of the world, who certainly had no bias to the side of religion. Sir Isaac Newton set out an infidel and came to be a very firm believer."

God is omnipotent, otherwise He would not be God; therefore He can do all things. He is infinitely wise; therefore whatever He decrees must be in accordance with the highest and truest principles of right. He is goodness itself; therefore He has a tender care of all the works of his hands, for the very hairs of our head are numbered; not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice.

We believe that the wondrous works of Jesus Christ related in the Gospel are real, true miracles, and we shall continue so to believe until some scientist shall arise upon earth, who will be able, by a simple word, or a touch, to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, and life to the dead. The most learned of philosophers, the most skilful of inventors, that ever walked the earth could not give life to the tiniest insect, nor, if they spent years of labour, could they succeed in forming a single blade of grass. Let those who so desire believe that their progenitors were apes, but we who are Christians hold to the Inspired Word, are satisfied with our noble origin as therein related, and hope to be worthy of our noble destiny. "Hardly do we guess aright," says the wise man, "at things that are upon earth; and with labour do we find the things that are before us. But the things that are in heaven, who shall search out?"*

We believe in the supernatural; so have believed countless generations of the human race before us. It is a belief that never can be

* Wisd. ix. 16.

eradicated from the heart of man, for it was planted therein by the Almighty Creator Himself. "Whenever I find," says Edmund Scherer in his *Mélange de Critique Religieuse*, "my faith in miraculous agency vacillating within me, the image of my God seems to be fading away from my eyes; He ceases to be for me God the free, the living, the personal, the God with whom the soul converses as with a master and friend; and this holy dialogue once interrupted, what is left us? How does life become sad! how does it lose its illusions! Reduced to the satisfaction of mere physical wants—to eat, to drink, to sleep, to make money—deprived of all horizon, how puerile does our maturity appear, how sorrowful our old age, how meaningless our anxieties! No more mystery, no more innocence, no more infinity, no longer any heaven above our heads, no more poesy. Ah! be sure, the incredulity which rejects the miracle has a tendency to unpeople heaven and to disenchant the earth. The supernatural is the natural sphere of the soul. It is the essence of its faith, of its hope, of its love. I know how specious criticism is, how victorious its arguments often appear; but I

know one thing besides, and perhaps I might here appeal to your own testimony: in ceasing to believe in what is miraculous the soul finds that it has lost the secret of divine life. Henceforth it is urged downward towards the abyss; soon it lies on the earth, and not seldom in the dirt."

The miracles of Christ were not performed in secret but in public and before the eyes of many witnesses. Those miracles were so clearly such and of so high an order as not merely to show a marvellous, but, in all truth, a divine power over nature and its laws. All things were made subject to Him. He relied on no other power but his own. All creation bowed before Him and acknowledged Him as Master. The very elements, as if they were rational agents, hearkened to his voice. He commands the storm, and there cometh a great calm. He bids the tempestuous sea lay aside its anger, and the subdued waves kiss his feet. He walks on the water as if it were dry land, and supports thereon the sinking Peter. All diseases fly at his touch, and at his command weakness is turned into strength, and sickness into immediate health. To the sightless orb He opens the

vision of God's beautiful creation, to the closed ear He unfolds the harmony of the universe, to the mute lips He gives the glorious faculty of speech, and to the paralysed limbs He restores youth and vigour. And, still more wondrous miracle in the natural order, the very dead He calls forth from the sealed tomb, robs the grave of its victory, gives back warmth to the cold heart, and sends the blood once more coursing through those veins that remorseless death had deprived of all pulsation. Evil spirits—the accursed fallen angels—feel his presence and dread his approach, and Satan's host are forced to fly at the bidding of the God-Man.

All knowledge is his, and the deepest secrets of men's minds are to Him as an open book. Nothing can escape his penetrating glance, and the vileness of the pharisaical heart is laid bare to the world. Never man spake as He spake, with a wisdom not of this world, and which no purely human being could ever reach, giving forth the most wonderful mysteries of the Godhead, announcing the most sublime dogmas, and yet in simplest language, and laying down principles of morality so clear, so sound, and yet so lofty, that no human legislator, no matter

howsoever gifted, could ever have conceived them. And then, if we consider his daily life and conversation, they were not only above the possibility of reproach, but a perfect example of his own most perfect legislation.

Christ walked the earth with that power inherent to Him as God ("He thought it no robbery Himself to be equal to God" *), and a the same time was the highest type of manhood, according to the loftiest standard of evangelical morality. All felt the power as well as the charm of his gracious presence, and hearts that were pure, and minds that were earnest and sincere He attracted to Himself, as iron is attracted by the magnet. As it is only the pure of heart that can see God, so it was chiefly that class which instinctively approached the Master and acknowleged his divinity, whilst others were forced to feel the presence of a Superior Power; and yet the passions which they allowed to cloud their understandings and bias their wills prevented them from submitting themselves to the blessed yoke of divine truth.

Before dwelling upon that crowning miracle

* Phil. ii. 6.

and most important proof of Christ's divinity, namely, his Resurrection, let us consider what strong evidence is derived from his wonderful prophecies.

To foresee the future is not given to man; it is the attribute of God alone. Yet we see that the future was as the present to Christ. He foretold in clear, unmistakable language, his rejection by his own people, the mockery and insults of the rabble, his terrible sufferings and ignominious death. "From that time Jesus began to show to his disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes and chief-priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again."*

He likewise foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, the dreadful desolation that would overspread the land, and the demolition of the Temple, not a stone of which, He declared, would be left upon a stone. Profane as well as sacred history testifies to the perfect fulfilment of this great prophecy.

Jerusalem at the time of its destruction was the most ancient city of the world, and was not

* Matt. xvi. 21.

surpassed in beauty by the most renowned cities of the East. It had lasted two thousand two hundred years. Its walls were lofty and massive, its fortifications well-nigh impregnable, and its grand towers, according to Josephus, were so admirably constructed that none other could compare with them. The same Jewish historian, who was himself an eye-witness of the destruction of the Holy City, declared that there was nothing left to show that it had ever existed. About thirty-seven years after our Lord's death it was besieged and razed to the ground by Roman armies under Titus, and eleven hundred thousand of the inhabitants lost their lives by sword, pestilence, or famine.

So deeply impressed was Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian, with the evident marks of divine vengeance on the Jewish people, that when he was afterwards congratulated on his great victory he candidly admitted that he was only an instrument in the hands of the Supreme Being, who was exceedingly angry with the Jewish people.

Titus gave strict orders to the army to spare the magnificent Temple; but one of the soldiers, urged, it is said, by a strange but very powerful

impulse he could not control ("being hurried on by a certain divine fury," Josephus says), threw a lighted torch within the sacred enclosure, which set fire to the edifice and completely demolished it, A.D. 70. Some three centuries afterwards, the foundations still remaining, the Jews scattered throughout the empire, instigated by the Emperor Julian the Apostate, who wished to render void the prophecy of Christ, that "not a stone should be left on a stone," endeavoured to rebuild the Temple. They assembled from all parts, and so great was their enthusiasm that the implements they made use of were of gold and silver. Whenever they attempted to work on the old site, balls of fire would issue from the very foundations, melt their implements, and force the workmen to desist from the undertaking; so it happened that in their endeavour to render void the prophecy of Christ, they became only instruments in his hands for fulfilling it all the more literally, so that in reality "not a stone was left upon a stone." This great and solemn fact was testified to by a pagan author, Ammianus Marcellinus, one of the great partisans of the apostate emperor.

Christ not only prophesied his rejection by the synagogue, his betrayal by Judas, his denial by Peter, his suffering, his death, and the manner of it, but above all in importance, his glorious resurrection from the tomb, triumphant over death, and sin, and hell.

This is the greatest, grandest, and most important proof of the divinity of Christ and his mission, and the very foundation-stone of Christianity. Take it away and the whole structure falls to the ground; or, as the apostle St. Paul declares: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain."*

Now let is calmly examine the facts and their bearing on the important subject which we are now considering, and we shall see that the Resurrection is the crowning proof of our Lord's divinity.

Christ several times prophesied that three days after his death He would arise from the tomb. This, He declared, was to be the decisive proof of his mission, and the confirmation for evermore of the truth of his utterances:

* 1 Cor. xv., 14.

"Then some of the Scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying: Master, we would see a sign from Thee. Who answering said to them: An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign; and a sign shall not be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."* On another occasion "the Jews answered and said to Him: What sign dost Thou show unto us, seeing Thou dost these things? Jesus answered and said to them: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said: Six-and-forty years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou raise it up in three days? But He spoke of the temple of his body. When, therefore He was risen again from the dead his disciples remembered that He had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had said."†

There is no doubt, then, that He prophesied his resurrection. Now, as to the fact itself, we

* Matt. xii. 39, 40. † 1 John, ii. 18-22.

have the testimony of eye-witnesses, namely, of those who had the inestimable privilege of seeing Him and conversing with Him for forty days afterwards. Their testimonies are recorded in the New Testament, the inspired Word of God. Even D'Alembert, one of the chief editors of the infidel *Encyclopédie*, felt himself forced to acknowledge that "the titles of the divinity of Christianity are contained in the books of the Old and New Testament. Criticism the most severe acknowledges the authenticity of these books; reason the most haughty recognises the truth of the facts they relate; and sound philosophy, resting on their truth and authenticity, concludes from the one and the other that they are divinely inspired."

So well aware were the enemies of Christ of his prophecy with regard to his resurrection, that "the next day which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying: Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said, while He was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day; lest, perhaps, his disciples come and steal Him away, and say

to the people: He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said to them: You have a guard; go, guard it as you know. And they, departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting guards."* These guards were warned of the supposed danger; and being *Roman* guards, attached to the service of the Roman governor, there is no likelihood that *they* slept at their posts, or were unmindful of the terrible risks they ran if they violated their trust.

If the Resurrection, as it is described by the evangelists, be not a fact, one of two things is certain: that is, either the apostles were themselves deceived, or they were deceivers.

They were not deceived; for not merely once but several times, under different circumstances, at varying hours, during the space of forty days, they had every sensible proof which man could require that they in all truth and reality beheld their risen Saviour. They had the privilegeof conversing with Him, eating with Him, and, like St. Thomas, one of their number, touching Him with their hands: "See my hands and

* Matt. xxvii. 62-66.

feet, that it is I myself; handle and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have. And when He had said this, He showed them his hands and feet. But while they yet believed not, and wondered for joy, He said: Have you here anything to eat? And they offered Him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb. And when He had eaten before them, taking the remains, He gave to them. And He said to them: These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; and He said to them: Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day."*

Our Blessed Saviour having "showed Himself alive after his Passion, by many proofs, for forty days appearing to them,"† there is not the slightest ground for supposing that so many, and such reliable witnesses, could possibly have

* Luke, xxiv. 39-46. † Acts, i. 3.

been deceived; otherwise no reliance could be placed on human testimony, on which all history, whether sacred or profane, must necessarily rest.

Nor were they deceivers, for what could they gain by deception? Certainly their worldly interests were not thereby forwarded; they made no money by it, nor did they seek to do so; they obtained not honours, nor fame, nor worldly applause, nor worldly influence. On the contrary, they knew, and they felt, and they afterwards experienced, that by proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and preaching in his name, only chains and the scourge, contempt and ignominy, persecution in every shape and form, and even a cruel death, awaited them. And yet they faltered not. They made no secret of their faith. They preached the resurrection publicly and boldly. Fifty days after that glorious event took place, St. Peter, the spokesman and chief of the apostolic band, did not hesitate to proclaim this fundamental doctrine of Christianity to an immense concourse of Jews gathered together in Jerusalem from all parts of the earth; and so impressed were they with the irresistible truthfulness of

his discourse, that three thousand of his audience were at once converted to the faith of the risen God. Many amongst them had been, no doubt, witnesses of the Lord's crucifixion, death, and burial; and had they any solid reason to doubt his resurrection they would not have forsaken all things to follow Christ and embrace the new belief.

That many of the Jews believed that Christ rose again from the dead may be inferred from the remarkable testimony of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, who was a contemporary of some of the apostles, having been born four years after the crucifixion of our Lord. He was sprung from the royal and priestly race, was a leading Pharisee, and at one time Governor of Galilee. In his work entitled, "Antiquities of the Jews" (book xviii., chapter iii.) he thus refers to Christ:—"Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call Him a man; for He was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to Him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had

condemned Him to the cross, those that loved Him at the first did not forsake Him; for He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from Him, are not extinct at this day." Among the old Christian writers, Eusebius, the ecclesiastial historian, St. Jerome, Cassiodorus, and many others quote this as a genuine extract from the writings of Josephus.

Abstracting from the divinity of Christ, it it would be absolutely impossible to account for the immediate and wide-spread diffusion of the Gospel, and the adherence of so many Gentiles as well as Jews. It required most powerful grace and invincible arguments to induce the Jews to embrace the faith, for strong and deeply rooted were their prejudices. They expected in their Messias a great temporal prince, who would lead them to sure victory, defeat and scatter all their enemies; who would sit on the throne of David, and raise them as a people to the highest pinnacle of glory and prosperity. And yet when He came among them, although the throne of David was right-

fully his, He claimed it not, and his look was "as of one hidden and despised," and they esteemed Him not. He spoke to them only of that kingdom which was not of this world, and He held up to their reverence and imitation poverty and humiliation, detachment from the world, chastity and charity. The Gentiles were called upon to renounce their national deities, to lay aside the pomp and ceremonial, and, what was still more difficult, the luxurious license of pagan worship, and to venerate what they before despised, to cultivate humility, self-denial, purity, and Christian love; virtues so rare that they scarcely knew their meaning. Both Jews and Gentiles had to enter the strait and narrow way of salvation by stooping under the yoke of the cross of Christ; "to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness."

That that which was before the stamp of ignominy should become the standard of glory; that the learned philosopher as well as the illiterate peasant, the rich and haughty patrician as well as the despised slave, should equally bow down and adore the Crucified King of the Jews, cannot be accounted for otherwise than by the irresistible conviction of Christ's divinity

and the operation of an all-powerful divine grace. This effect was not and could not have been produced by human eloquence, genius, wealth, or station; for the apostles were totally deficient in all these sources of power and influence. In poverty, meekness, suffering, and contempt, they went forth to the conquest of the world, armed only with the commission of Christ, and relying solely on the strength of his holy name.

It was surely not by the "persuasive words of human wisdom" that the apostles succeeded in convincing the world. What the sublime Bossuet said of St. Paul can be affirmed with even more truth of the other apostles, who had not the same natural gifts as the disciple of Gamaliel: "The discourse of the apostle is simple, but his thoughts are quite divine. If he be ignorant of rhetoric, if he despise philosophy, Jesus Christ stands him instead of all things; and his name, which is continually upon his lips; his mysteries, which he treats so divinely, will render his simplicity omnipotent. He will go—this man, so ignorant in the art of speaking well, with his harsh address, with his diction, which betrays the foreigner, will go to

polished Greece, the mother of philosophers and orators; and, in spite of the opposition of the world, he will there establish more churches than Plato gained disciples by that eloquence which was accounted divine. He will preach Jesus in Athens, and the most learned of its senators will quit the Areopagus for the school of this barbarian. He will push his conquests still further: he will humble at the feet of the Saviour the majesty of the Roman fasces in the person of a pro-consul, and he will cause the judges before whom he is summoned to tremble in their tribunals. Rome herself shall hear his voice, and that imperial city shall one day esteem herself more highly honoured by an epistle addressed to her citizens by Paul than by all the celebrated orations delivered by her own Cicero.

"And now, Christians, how happens all this? It is because Paul possessed means of persuasion which Greece never taught, and which Rome never acquired. A supernatural power which delights in exalting what the proud despise accompanied the august simplicity of his words. . . . It was by this divine virtue that the simplicity of the apostle vanquished all things.

It overthrew idols, established the cross of Jesus, and persuaded multitudes of men to die in defence of its glory; finally, in his admirable Epistles, it has explained such grand secrets that the most sublime geniuses, after having been long engaged in the loftiest speculations of which philosophy is capable, have descended from the vain height to which they imagined themselves raised, that they might learn to lisp n the school of Jesus Christ under the instruction of St. Paul."

This fact stands plainly before the eyes of all, that the Christianised world is the strongest proof of the divinity of Christ. That the Church which He established was able to subsist during the first three centuries of its history, with the powers of the whole world combined against it, and determined upon its destruction: all the forces at the command of the mighty Roman Empire, and extending through all its ramifications to the extremities of the earth; the power of emperors with their edicts, of kings with their mandates, of all local magistrates with their complete machinery of ingenious cruelty; and, to add to this, the deluding sophisms of so-called philosophers, the

prejudices of the age, and, last though by no means least, the full strength of human passions in each individual heart—that the Christian Church was bitterly and perseveringly opposed by all these sources of power among men, and yet gloriously triumphed, is the greatest and most magnificent proof that could be given to the world that Christianity is of God, and that its Founder cannot be otherwise than what He represented Himself to be—truly the Incarnate Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, and equal to Him in power, majesty, and glory everlasting.

"The life of Christ," says Jean Paul Richter, "concerns Him who, being the holiest among the mighty, the mightiest among the holy, lifted with his pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages."

What are the mightiest men that ever lived in comparision with Jesus, the grand central figure of the universe? Let one of the world's greatest heroes give us the answer. Napoleon, when in exile at St. Helena, thus expressed himself on this subject:

"I see in Lycurgus, Numa, and Mohammed,

only legislators who, having the first rank in the State, have sought the best solution of the social problem; but I see nothing there which reveals divinity. They themselves have never raised their pretensions so high. As for me, I recognise the gods and these great men as beings like myself. They have performed a lofty part in their times, as I have done. Nothing announces them divine. On the contrary, there are numerous resemblances between them and myself—foibles and errors which allay them to me and to humanity. It is not so with Christ. Everything in Him astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between Him and whomever else in the world there is no possible term of comparision. . . . I think I understand somewhat of human nature, and I tell you all these were men, and I am a man, but not one is like unto Him; Jesus Christ was more than man. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires; but upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded his empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him. . . . Men wonder at the conquests of Alexander, but here

is a Conqueror who draws men to Himself for their highest good, who unites to Himself, incorporates with Himself, not a nation but the whole human race."

What a subject for contemplation is that divine life of the world's Saviour, ushered in by chant of angelic choir, yet manifesting Himself to men in a manger; ruling the entire universe, yet willingly subjecting Himself to his own creatures; possessing all power and infinite treasures, yet choosing to be poor and humble, and in want of the necessaries of life—a God becoming man, that He might ennoble and elevate human nature to the highest point of glory conceivable! Well might each one of us exclaim in the tender accents of Father Faber:

"Jesus is God! Oh! could I now
But compass land and sea,
To teach and tell this single truth,
How happy should I be!

"Oh! had I but an angel's voice,
I would proclaim so loud
Jesus the good, the beautiful,
Is everlasting God."

A Voice from the Manger.

THE world was sadly in need of a Saviour. From the moment the angel of God stood at the gate of the earthly paradise with flaming sword to prevent the re-entrance of fallen man, the human race had gradually been sinking from bad to worse. For four thousand years, downward was the movement and deep the decline. Idolatry reigned in every land, except among the Jewish people. The worship of the one true God was unknown, or, if known, known only to be rejected. Every country had its own national gods, and countless were the divinities that claimed man's allegiance. The very animals of the field were made objects of adoration, as in Egypt. Images of wood, brass, and gold were set up for worship. Even the most shameful

vices were deified, and each had its god, like Bacchus and Venus; and beyond count was the number of lascivious worshippers.

Debasement of mind and corruption of heart held fearful sway in every nation and in every clime. It would seem as if the Almighty had permitted morality to reach its lowest ebb, in order to convince the world beyond possibility of doubt of its absolute need of a Redeemer. For no merely human power or influence was able to save, or even to elevate. Philosophy endeavoured to cope with the difficulty, but in vain. It was able to give out a few noble maxims here and there, mixed with much error, and whatever of truth it preached its own champions were unable to practise. Moreover, it could never, in any form, reach the hearts of the multitude. Neither was literature or progress in art and science capable of checking the ruin or preventing the general corruption.

Neither polish of manners, eloquent sentimentality, nor even the highest mental culture that the world ever saw, and which certainly was to be found in classic Greece and imperious Rome, could stem the torrent of an ever-spreading immorality. They were steeped in

licentiousness as well as idolatry. What Lecky, in his "History of European Morals," says of Rome can be equally predicated of other peoples and nations before the advent of Christ: "The mass of the Roman people were plunged in a condition of depravity which no mere ethical teaching could adequately correct. The moral condition of the empire is, indeed, in some respects one of the most appalling pictures on record."

All nature seemed to feel its utter degradation, and, according to St. Paul, was groaning in spirit, awaiting its deliverance.

The Jewish people were in momentary expectation of the Messias, whose time they judged to be near at hand from the nature of the prophecies in his regard. All signs seemed to point that way. Their ideas, however, of a Messias were altogether carnal and worldly. It was thus they interpreted the prophecies. They looked forward to Him as a mighty prince, a great conqueror, who would overthrow all the enemies of Israel, restore her to her pristine glory, and elevate her to a foremost rank among all the nations of the earth. His coming, they expected, would be heralded to the world, his birth the occasion of universal joy and feasting,

his cradle surrounded with royal pomp and magnificence, and his court the grandest that could be conceived.

But God's ways are not as our ways. Christ's coming, with all its attendant circumstances, was to be in direct opposition to all the ways, fancies, and expectations of men—of Jews as well as Gentiles.

The world was lost through pride; it was to be saved through humility. It was degraded by love of riches; it was to be elevated by evangelical poverty. It was corrupted by sensuality and seduced by transitory glory; it was to be restored and regenerated by mortification and love of suffering. All this was demonstrated in the birth of Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem.

Pride was the chief cause of man's ruin—an inordinate desire of self-exaltation, an unholy ambition to cast off all sense of dependence, even on the Creator, and a fatal curiosity to know what He, for his own wise ends, wished to keep hidden. There was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; our first parents were not satisfied simply with the knowledge and full experience of what was good, and superlatively good, but they desired, with a

fatal desire, to taste and know what was evil. They obtained their wish, and they suffered, and we likewise have to suffer, the consequences. By this sin of our first progenitors, they and their descendants were for ever excluded from the heavenly inheritance in store for them had they remained faithful in their obedience. That sin of our origin has been transmitted to us with all the terrible penalties, all the miseries and afflictions which it entailed.

There are many persons, it is true, who consider themselves so learned and enlightened that they scoff at this doctrine of original sin, looking upon it as a relic of the ages of darkness and superstition, not worthy of the consideration of the free and cultured minds of this progressive nineteenth century.

But it is far easier to scoff at it than to explain it away. One thing is certain: if you reject this fundamental truth you deprive yourself of the only key to the great mysteries of life. Without it all is confusion and darkness impenetrable. It is not more difficult to understand the transmission of original sin than it is to solve the mystery why other sins of which parents are guilty are visited on their children

to the third and fourth generation. God has so ordained and so declared in Holy Writ, and whether or no we believe his inspired word, the fact itself is patent to the eyes of every observer.

Evidences of the fall are in us and around us, and unless we admit it we shall be obliged to confess that the whole universe is wrong, that no Providence reigns, that all is the effect of blind chance. But no man gifted with godlike reason should descend to such absurdities when the Almighty has placed within the reach of his intelligence a solution sufficiently plain and satisfactory.

Original sin is the oldest of traditions, and is to be found among all tribes and peoples. Humboldt discovered among the ancient Mexicans the sacred tradition of the evil genius under the form of a serpent conversing with the mother of the human race; and Voltaire himself declared that "the fall of degenerate man is the foundation of the theology of all the ancient nations."

This doctrine is necessary for a clear understanding of our relations with God and our Redeemer, of our present position, the struggle that is constantly going on within us—the flesh

lusting against the spirit, the body or lower part of our nature continually striving to usurp command over the higher part, or the soul, wherein God has fixed his likeness in the human trinity of the will, memory, and understanding

It does not, nor was it intended, to explain to a demonstration all these mysteries, for then they would remain mysteries no longer; but it furnishes a solid basis of truth whereon to build our faith. It is not the part of sound sense or logic to reject truths of a higher order on account of some obscurity which necessarily is attached, considering the feebleness of our minds and the limited range of our knowledge. Fénelon, in his reply to a certain Mr. Ramsay —whom he afterwards succeeded in converting to the faith—thus eloquently expressed himself on this subject:—"Why should we reject that light which consoles the heart because it is mingled with obscurity which humbles the intellect? Should not the true religion elevate and lower man by showing him at once his greatness and his weakness? You have not as yet a sufficiently enlarged view of Christianity. It is not only a holy law that purifies the heart; it is also a mysterious wisdom that subdues the

understanding. It is a continual sacrifice, by which all our being pays homage to the Supreme Reason. By practising its morality we renounce pleasures through love for Infinite Beauty. By believing its mysteries we sacrifice our ideas through respect for Eternal Truth. Without this twofold sacrifice of our thoughts and our passions the holocaust would be imperfect, the victim would be defective. It is thus that man entirely disappears in the presence of the Being of beings. We are not to examine whether it is necessary for God to reveal to us mysteries in order to humble our understanding. The question is whether or not He has revealed them. If He has spoken, obedience and love cannot be separated. Christianity is a fact. As you admit the evidences of this fact, you can no longer examine what you are to believe or not to believe. All the difficulties which you have suggested vanish at once when the mind is cured of its presumption. It is easy, then, to believe that the divine nature and the order of Divine Providence are wrapped in mystery impenetrable to our weak reason. The Infinite Being must be incomprehensible to his creatures. On the one hand, we behold a legis-

lator whose law is altogether divine, who proves his mission by miraculous facts, the evidence of which it is impossible to reject; on the other hand, we find mysteries that baffle our understanding. What are we to do between these two embarrassing extremes of a clear revelation and an impenetrable obscurity? Our only resource is to make the sacrifice of our intellect —a sacrifice which forms part of the worship which we owe the Supreme Being."

Man fell through pride, and its roots still remain in the human heart. It is only by the antidote of Christ's self-imposed humiliation that it can be deadened and its poisonous effects removed. Pride offers the greatest insult to the majesty of God. It was the sin that changed Lucifer into Satan, and legions of angels into devils. It strikes at the very honour of God, and it was to repair his wounded honour that the Divine Word became incarnate. For no man nor number of men, no matter howsoever pure or holy, could ever possibly satisfy for the outrage which even one mortal sin offers to the adorable majesty of the Almighty. Even if they were to do penance for countless ages they could never make due reparation; not even

the highest of the seraphim, not even Mary, the holiest of all creatures, could satisfy of themselves for the slightest offence to the Godhead. For the distance between the finite and the Infinite is immeasurable, and an insult offered to an Infinite Being could never be atoned for by any creature or simply finite being. God Himself, however, provided the remedy by one of the Divine Persons assuming our nature, and, in his capacity as man, offering a complete and most satisfactory reparation to the offended Deity on the part of his brethren in the flesh.

In obedience to the will of his Heavenly Father, and in full accord with his own, the Eternal Word condescended to our low estate and humbled Himself, "taking the form of a servant," in order to remove the mournful effects of man's senseless pride and disobedience. Heaven's gates would have forever remained closed against the children of men had He not vouchsafed to come and pay the terrible ransom.

Milton, in his "Paradise Lost," thus gives expression to this great Christian truth:—

"Say, heavenly powers, where shall we find such love?
Which of you will be mortal to redeem
Man's mortal crime? and just, th' unjust to save?

Dwells in all heaven charity so dear?
He ask'd, but all the heavenly choir stood mute
And silence was in heaven; on man's behalf
Patron or intercessor none appear'd;
Much less that durst upon his own head draw
The deadly forfeiture and ransom set.
And now without redemption all mankind
Must have been lost, adjudged to death and hell
By doom severe, had not the Son of God
In whom the fulness dwells of love divine,
His dearest mediation thus renew'd."

To overcome man's pride He, the Mighty One, came in the most humble form that it is possible to conceive. Who can consider without the greatest amazement and loving wonder the Son of the Most High, Him by whom all things were made, infinite wisdom personified, clothing Himself with our frail humanity; the All-powerful One becoming a poor, helpless, babe, the All-wise One a speechless infant, the Creator of untold worlds a weak, shivering mortal, homeless and friendless in the midst of those He came to save!

"He came unto his own, and his own received Him not," because He came not only in humility but in the most abject poverty; and the world loves not poverty. What a long, tedious, wearisome journey did not his Virgin Mother

and holy Joseph undertake in the bleak and comfortless midwinter! In vain sought they shelter from friends, relatives, and acquaintances. They who are in prosperity have many so-called friends and need them not; they who are in poverty or adversity seek for friends and rarely find them. The foot-sore travellers sought the village inn; but no welcome was there extended to them, for they had not that which could purchase a welcome. Tired, wearied, sorrowing, but patient, the tender maiden and her faithful guardian at last found refuge in a poor, wretched cavern in the side of a hill, that served as a stable or shelter in winter for the cattle of the neighbourhood.

There, wonderful to relate, is brought forth at midnight the Saviour of the world! No other mortals were present but Mary and Joseph, no other attendants but the mute beasts, whose hot breath served to warm the shivering Babe. He was wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in the manger; the poorest of the children of men. What a history! so wonderfully simple, yet so incomparably sublime, that only the meek, and humble, and pure of heart can ever read it, or, reading it, understand.

Christ openly despised everything that the

world prizes most and admires. He could have come, had He so desired, with such a display of power and magnificence as would have cast all that the earth had seen before into absolute insignificance; but He wished it not. He came in such a way as to teach us most thoroughly and effectively the lessons we most needed; and there, from the rude manger which He selected for his first pulpit, as the cross was his last, the Divine Babe preaches to us humility, poverty, detachment from the world, self-denial, and the value of suffering.

"Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." If He who is infinite perfection itself assumed such a lowly form, it ought surely to have the effect of causing us to cast off all senseless pride. "What have we that we have not received, and why glory as if we had not received?" All that man has—his different faculties, talents, blessings, whether in the natural or the supernatural order—are the free gifts of God. To some He has given more, to others less; those who have received more should be only all the more grateful to the "Giver of every good and perfect gift." Those who are placed in high station or dignity have no reason for being proud or haughty on that

account, but rather more fearful by consideration of their heavier responsibilities. They should not lord it over their inferiors, like the heathen, but rule in the spirit of Christ. "You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that are the greater exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be greater among you let him be your minister. And he that will be first among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a redemption for many."*

There is the pride of family, the pride of talent, the pride of education, and the pride of wealth, making countless bitter distinctions among men; but Christ wished all to learn this lesson: that "every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." He Himself laid down this grand principle of the spiritual life, He Himself gave us its noblest example; and certain it is that no one can make any real progress towards sanctification until the foundation of humility be properly and firmly laid, otherwise he might build his spiritual edifice high as the Babel

* Matt. xx. 25-28.

tower, and in the end find only disappointment and confusion.

The next lesson which the Divine Babe teaches us is to unlearn the lesson taught by the world. The world looks upon poverty as a curse, but Christ chose it by preference for his own state, and choosing it, blessed it for evermore. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." A man may be poor in reality, that is, deprived of all earthly goods, and yet not be "poor in spirit;" for he may be totally dissatisfied with his condition, he may murmur against Divine Providence, and thus lose all heavenly reward by his want of resignation to the will of God.

On the other hand, a man may be in the possession of great wealth and yet be "poor in spirit;" for it is possible, although unfortunately exceedingly rare, for a rich man to look upon himself merely as a steward of the Almighty (in reality he is nothing else), and consequently he would not then place his heart, or his heart's affections, in his earthly treasures, but strive to make a noble and generous use of what God has placed at his disposal for the benefit of suffering humanity.

"Then Jesus said to his disciples: Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And when they had heard this the disciples wondered very much, saying: Who, then, can be saved? And Jesus, beholding, said to them: With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."*

To this class of persons our Lord gives this solemn and salutary advice: "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."†

The Divine Babe thus preaches to us detachment from the world and the things of the world, and to set our affections on the higher and truer life to come; "for where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also."

God does not forbid a reasonable solicitude with regard to one's own support or that of

* Matt. xix. 23-26. † Matt. vi. 19, 20.

those entrusted to our care, but He wishes us to cast aside all undue attachment to what is perishable. He condemns an overweening anxiety in hoarding up this world's goods at the expense of the sovereign and eternal: "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." * He at the same time gives the blessed assurance that "your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things," and that, while thus striving to serve Him, we should trust in his kindly providence. "I have been young, and now am old," says the Psalmist, "and I have not seen the just man forsaken nor his seed seeking bread." †

The infant Lord, from his rude cradle, instructs us also in self-denial: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." ‡ For even from the first moment of his existence the cross was always present to Jesus, and He bore it in spirit from the manger until it, in all reality, was laid on his shoulders up the rugged mount of Calvary.

In calling ourselves by the name of Christian we profess to be his followers, and we are not

* Matt. vi. 33. † Ps. xxxvi. 25. ‡ Matt. xvi. 24.

worthy of the name unless we walk in his footsteps and taste of that chalice of bitterness which was never absent from his sacred lips during his sojourn upon earth. We cannot expect to indulge in every luxury, to make our life here a merry round of enjoyment, and still hope to have the fulness of happiness hereafter. We should remember that we are in exile, in a state of probation, and that "here we have no lasting city, but we seek for one to come."

That those who have no religion, no hope for the hereafter, should shrink from suffering here is but simply natural; but those who, by faith divine, see in the shivering, helpless, poorly-clad Babe of Bethlehem a God incarnate ought to be willing to embrace suffering, sorrow, and trial for his sake, knowing that thereby they become more like unto Him who voluntarily underwent all this humiliation to save them from eternal disgrace. So we perceive, in this lovely mystery infinite majesty assuming the garb of humility, infinite power clothing itself with our infirmity, and eternity shrouding itself in our mortality; and all this to establish peace between heaven and earth, and an everlasting brotherhood between all men.

The Hidden Life.

TRUE, lasting, imperishable beauty is that of the soul, or, as the inspired writer expresses it: "*Omnis gloria filiæ regis ab intus*"*—"All the glory of the daughter of the king is within." So the greatest beauty and most wondrous glory of Christ's existence upon earth, in the sight of his Heavenly Father and the celestial court, must have been found in his hidden life at Nazareth.

Only three years were spent before the gaze of the public—three years full of the wonderful deeds of his sacred ministry—yet, strange

* Ps. xliv. 14.

mystery! thirty years were passed in obscurity and solitude, unknown to the world He came to save.

From the time of the return of the Holy Family from Egypt, from the infancy of Christ until the opening of his public career at the age of thirty, the Sacred Scriptures relate nothing of all the intervening years but the one incident of the Divine Boy's visit to Jerusalem, at the age of twelve years, in company with his parents and friends.

Thirty long years, out of a comparatively short life, were therefore passed in obscurity. A wonderfully deep mystery is certainly to be found herein, and yet one which contains lessons of the profoundest wisdom for all who seek to penetrate the veil that hides so much of spiritual beauty from unreflecting minds and cold, unimpressionable hearts.

The hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth was the object of ceaseless contemplation and the source of untold delights to all the host of heaven. The Eternal Father looked with infinite complacency on the human soul of his Incarnate Son—that soul which was the most perfect work that ever issued from the creative power

of the Blessed Trinity: that soul overflowing with most precious grace and responding most faithfully to every inspiration. The Holy Spirit likewise looked with ineffable love on the Possessor of the plenitude of his choicest gifts.

The soul of Jesus, being full of all grace and knowledge from the very first moment of its existence, could admit of no increase, yet the *manifestation* of his wondrous gifts was gradual, and to all human appearance developed with age—"grew with his growth and strengthened with his strength."

During those long years He not only did not disclose his divinity, but, on the contrary, chose the most common, lowly, obscure life that can be imagined. There was nothing in the slightest degree extraordinary to the eyes of men in his life or habits. He lived in a lonely, retired town of a despised province, far away from the noise and bustle, distractions and ambitions, of the outside world. He seemingly led the ordinary life of children, boys, and young men of his time, yet we cannot doubt that even at the youngest age, or in his most ordinary actions, there was a something about Him that could not fail to attract the gaze

even of the most careless observer A purity more than angelic shone from his face, a sacred pensiveness left its stamp on his features, a gravity and dignity far beyond his years showed themselves in his every action and every movement.

We cannot conceive of Him as being a petulant, forward, clamorous boy, but one ever modest, retiring in disposition, gentle, considerate, amiable, and self-possessed. Even in the messages on which He was sent from the poor but blessed little household there was no hastiness, no over-eagerness, but a calm, happy, cheerful obedience in fulfilment of duty. How that lovely Virgin Mother and her noble protector watched those sacred infant footsteps! How eagerly they scanned every exterior manifestation of that wondrous reason which was so closely allied with Eternal Wisdom.

With what ecstasy of delight did not the angels of God look down upon that simple, holy household, as at morning and evening and other stated times they knelt in fervent family prayer, sending up their supplications to the Most High, the Child Jesus offering in his scared humanity a worship infinitely acceptable to, and entirely worthy of, the Godhead!

When brought to the synagogue every Sabbath He must have attracted the gaze of all by his pious demeanour, mild, peaceful countenance, deep spirit of recollection, and holy gravity, intensely bent on doing full homage to his Eternal Father.

The dearest spot in the whole universe to the court of heaven was that sheltered little village, and above all, that humble home where dwelt that blessed trinity of earth—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Companions, no doubt, Jesus had, suitable to his age and disposition; for He was like unto us in all things excepting sin. These were probably holy youths like James, and John (his own first cousins, whom He was silently preparing for their apostolic vocation), the Boanerges—"Sons of Thunder"—James the Just, as he was styled by all the Jews; and John, the Beloved Disciple, whose place was nearest the Sacred Heart of his Master. Not unlikely in those early days did the holy Elizabeth, another near relative, sometimes bring her already sanctified son, John the Baptist, to visit the Holy Family and to gaze upon the face of that Divine Boy for whom he

was to prepare the way in the hearts of the people.

What sublime destinies were in store for those loved companions of Christ's childhood—the grave James, the loving John, the stern, unbending, yet holy and mortified John the Baptist! The were all to be invested with the highest dignities in the Church of God, but at the same time they were all to be made partakers of Christ's chalice of bitterness, humiliation, and suffering.

It is not in accordance with the Gospel narrative, or with our ideas of the hidden life, that Christ made any display of his divine power, such as the apocryphal writings would, lead us to believe; yet we see no reason to doubt that, notwithstanding his ordinary, obscure life, He still must have been a source of wonder to the inhabitants of the town by his unruffled amiability, his holy pensiveness, the sweetness of his manners, and that irresistible attraction which holiness, especially when possessed in such an eminent degree, could not fail to exercise over all with whom the Divine Child came in contact. We may rest assured that "virtue went out from Him" even in those early days—a power and a grace that

moved men's souls and forcibly appealed to men's hearts, inspiring them with holy thoughts and lofty aspirations.

His first lessons He learned at his Virgin Mother's knee. There He knelt to lisp his infant prayers to his Father in heaven, and there He was instructed in the fundamental principles of the law; for no mother in Israel was so well versed in the Sacred Book as that holy Virgin who lived in the Temple, as tradition informs us, from the age of three years until she was espoused to the blessed Joseph.

As soon as Christ grew sufficently strong to accompany his parents He joyfully went with them to the synagogue, not only on the Sabbath for the morning and evening services, but also on Mondays and Thursdays, on feast days and fast days (as was the custom with pious Israelites), when the law was read and expounded, and appropriate lessons from the prophets and the Psalms were selected for the enlightenment of the minds and refreshment of the souls of those in attendance,

Education was held in the highest esteem among the Jews—so much so that they considered a town or village doomed to destruction

that did not have schools for the instruction of youth. The Talmud attributes the overthrow of Jerusalem to the neglect of the people in this regard. It is well to remark in this connection that they never permitted science to be divorced from religion; they would never consider such defective training worthy of the name of *education*. The law was the first and most necessary knowledge to be acquired, as Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, clearly states in his first book against Apion: "All our actions and studies, and all our words (in Moses' settlement), have a reference to piety towards God; for He hath left none of these in suspense or undetermined. For there are two ways of coming at any sort of learning and a moral conduct of life: the one is by instruction in words, the other by practical exercises. Now, other lawgivers have separated these two ways in their opinions, and choosing one of those ways of instruction, or that which best pleased every one of them, neglected the other. Thus did the Lacedæmonians and Cretans teach by practical exercises, but not by words; while the Athenians and almost all the other Grecians made laws about what was to be done or left

undone, but had no regard to the exercising them thereto in practice. But for our legislator, he very carefully joined these two methods of instruction together; for he neither left these practical exercises to go on without verbal instruction, nor did he permit the hearing of the law to proceed without the exercises for practice; but beginning immediately from the earliest infancy and the appointment of every one's diet, he made a fixed rule of law, what sorts of food they should abstain from and what sorts they should make use of, as also what communion they should have with others; what great diligence they should use in their occupations, and what times of rest should be interposed; that, by living under that law as a father and a master, we might be guilty of no sin, neither voluntary nor out of ignorance; for He did not suffer the guilt of ignorance to go on without punishment, but demonstrated the law to be the best and most necessary instruction of all others, permitting the people to leave off their other employments and to assemble together for the hearing of the law and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or oftener, but every week."

This was the kind of training our Lord received in his own village home; for He in nowise exempted Himself from the general laws that governed the community,

As was remarked before, the only incident related in the Gospel with regard to those long years of residence at Nazareth was the Lord's visit, at the age of twelve, in company with Mary and Joseph, to Jerusalem. St. Luke * thus describes it: "His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the pasch. And when He was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast. And after they had fulfilled the days, when they returned the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And not finding Him they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were

* ii. 41-51.

astonished at his wisdom and his answers. And seeing Him, they wondered. And his Mother said to Him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold, thy Father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said to them: How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about the things that are my Father's? And they understood not the word that He spoke unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."

How many mysteries lie hidden in the short narration of that remarkable visit to the Holy City—that "solitary floweret out of the wonderful enclosed garden of the thirty years, plucked precisely there where the swollen bud, at a *distinctive crisis*, bursts into flower."

"The age of twelve years," says Canon Farrar,* "was a critical age for a Jewish boy. It was the age at which, according to Jewish legend, Moses had left the house of Pharaoh's daughter, and Samuel had heard the voice which summoned him to the prophetic office, and Solomon had given the judgment which first revealed his possession of wisdom, and

*"Life of Christ," c. vi.

Josias had first dreamed of his great reform. At this age a boy, of whatever rank, was obliged, by the injunctions of the rabbis and the custom of his nation, to learn a trade for his own support."

Humanely speaking, how the Divine Boy, at this most interesting age, must have longed to behold the capital of his nation, the centre of religious thought and worship, once the highly-favoured city of the Almighty! Nothing ceremonially impure was permitted within its sacred enclosure, and even the remains of the dead should be carried out before nightfall. He no doubt admired its strong massive walls, its magnificent buildings, but his thoughts were concentrated on things of higher and greater moment. He anxiously bent his steps in the direction of the grand and holy Temple; and whilst others who were paying their usual devotions may have been distracted by the beauty of the surroundings and the gathering of relatives and friends, his thoughts were so absorbed in reverence for the holy place and in acts of supremest worship that He watched not the time nor heeded the departure of his own little pilgrim band *en route* for their distant

home. He lovingly lingered around those sacred precincts, where He felt he was at home, in his Father's house upon earth, the type of the Eternal Holy of Holies.

It was not until after a most anxious search that his heart-sore parents "found Him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions." What a beautiful, touching sight, what a fruitful theme for meditation: the boy Jesus, the youthful Doctor of twelve years, sitting in his own Temple, and, although modestly asking questions, yet opening up new and grand vistas of thought, before undiscovered, to those who had grown gray in the teaching of the law. He Himself, in a few simple words, gives us the key to his discourse on that occasion: "Did you not know that I must be about the things that are my Father's?"

This was what was uppermost in his thoughts, and his whole life was spent in furtherance of that grandest of all pursuits, "his Father's business," the fulfilment of his will, his greater honour and glory, and the salvation of souls.

But, "they understood not the word that He

spoke unto them," it was no small part of their trial not to understand, for, had they comprehended fully, all mystery would have vanished, and there would have been no place for grief. A great trial, indeed, it was, and a heavy affliction, for Mary and Joseph to have lost their precious Charge for the space of three days. To be able to conceive such a deep sorrow we should first be obliged to comprehend how dear Jesus was to them; more precious by far than any other child could possibly be to a parent.

By the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit, Mary conceived Him miraculously, clothed Him with her own flesh and blood, and consequently must have loved Him with a love so deep, so absorbing, so entrancing that not even the intelligence of a seraph could fathom its intensity. Holy Joseph knew full well the relations in which he stood to that Virgin Mother and that Divine Child: He knew that He was the representative of the Eternal Father in the guardianship of those precious charges, the dearest with which the earth was ever blessed. No wonder, then, that this holy pair "sought Him sorrowing," for their minds were tortured with self-accusations of supposed

neglect, and their hearts were heavy and sore at the loss of Him who was their light, their life, their love. With the exception, perhaps, of his forced and hurried exile into Egypt, this was the heaviest grief that ever touched the heart of the venerable Joseph during his earthly career; for we know that he was, in mercy, taken away from the world before the suffering and death of his reputed Son.

It would be well for others who, unlike Mary and Joseph, have lost Jesus by their own neglect, sinfulness, or indifference, if they, too, would seek Him "sorrowing." If they but felt and experienced how terrible is their loss they would seek Him until they found Him, and never again relinquish their hold upon Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life."

On the other hand, there are some who, like unto Mary and Joseph, believe that they have lost Jesus, and are in the agony of doubt and suspense lest they may have lost Him through their own want of care and watchfulness. They are those good, pious, tender, loving souls who would dread nothing more in the universe than to be deprived of God's grace, and yet they feel not the sunshine, the abiding sweet-

ness of Christ's presence. He seems to hide his face from them; they are encompassed with dark, heavy clouds on which they can see no "silver lining;" they derive no sensible consolation from prayer or meditation; heaven seems to interpose a wall of brass against their petitions, and all light appears to have gone out from their souls.

Jesus is only *hiding* Himself from them, in order to try their fidelity, to show them their own weakness, to purify them from some imperfections or earthly affections, so that He may afterwards draw them closer to Himself in the embraces of eternal love. "For, when thou approachest the service of God, prepare thyself for temptation," says Ecclesiasticus, the inspired writer.

Thus has Jesus treated those nearest and dearest; thus did He behave to Mary and Joseph; thus did He act towards patient Job and holy Tobias: "Since thou wert acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee," said the Angel Raphael to Tobias. The great St. Teresa suffered in this manner without any alleviation during eighteen long years; and yet, acknowledging the wisdom and

goodness of Divine Providence in her regard, she was frequently heard to exclaim: "*Aut pati aut mori*"—she was willing either to suffer or die.

Christ's visit to Jerusalem was the only glimmer of his divine mission given forth to momentarily attract the attention of the world, and then only to shrink back into his mysterious, well-beloved solitude until He reached the age of thirty. What was done during that long interval of eighteen years is summed up in these few words of St. Luke the Evangelist: "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And his Mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace, with God and men."

Thirty years, then, out of the thirty-three of his mortal life, were spent in being "subject to them." Remarkably few as are these words, they contain a vast amount of food for thought, and, what is of more importance, an immense deal of practical instruction for high and low, old and young, learned and unlearned. Herein is displayed the wonderful power of God's word. With all its simplicity it gives us in a few short expressions, put forth sometimes in the home-

liest language, more matter for consideration of the deepest moment than all the books that were ever written by the pen of man. It relies not on "the persuasive words of human wisdom," but tells the loftiest truths clearly and plainly, and at the same time appeals most effectively to every sincere heart.

"He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." The most striking characteristic of Christ was his entire perfect obedience—first of all to his Heavenly Father, then to his Mother and foster-father, to the Jewish law and the civil authorities.

It was in submission to the will of the Eternal Father, although perfectly in accordance with his own, that He left his heavenly kingdom in order to take upon Himself our human nature, and in it to offer due reparation to the offended majesty of the Godhead by suffering the most bitter, prolonged agony for the sins of all his brethren in the flesh. "Then, said I, behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will; O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart."*

* Ps. xxxix. 8, 9.

"My meat," he declares, "is to do the will of Him that sent me, that I may perfect his work."* His well-nigh constant exclamation was: "I seek not my own will, but the will of Him that sent me."† "Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please Thee: Then said I: Behold I come."‡ He came to earth, then, out of obedience, and remained "obedient unto death, the death even of the cross," and in his bitterest agony his broken heart still uttered the cry; "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from me. But yet not my will but thine be done."§

That Christ as man should be obedient to his Heavenly Father, although as God He was equal to Him in power, majesty, and infinite perfection, does not strike us as being very wonderful; but that He by whom all things were made that are in heaven and upon earth; that He, the all-powerful Creator, should, even in his assumed human nature, willingly subject Himself to his

* John, iv. 34. † Ibid. v. 30.
‡ Heb. x. 5-7. § Luke, xxii. 42.

own creatures, the works of his hand, so overwhelms our poor, limited understanding that we are totally unable to comprehend such immeasurable self-humiliation. Yet such is the astounding fact. During thirty long years Jesus, the God-Man, the source of all holiness, the Light of the world, the Sun of Justice, became voluntarily subject to Mary and Joseph, and freely performed every service that such subjection necessarily implies. He needed no command, but was ever ready to fulfil their every wish. In his early childhood He rendered whatever little aid his youthful hands could give to his loving Mother in her various household duties, and was no doubt the cheerful bearer of many messages to the outside world. We may rest assured that He even anticipated their wants and did everything in his power, humanly speaking, to lighten their labours or cheer their hearts.

What a grand example of submission to the whole world for all generations! The great lack of this age is obedience. We see the want of it in the old as well as in the young. The universal cry is for liberty, freedom, independence. These are excellent things in themselves,

most precious boons, but there must be some fixed limit, otherwise liberty becomes licence, freedom degenerates into the slavery of passion, and independence is but another name for the absolute rejection of all authority, whether human or divine. Disobedience of children to their parents, want of respect for authority and of reverence for superiors, are the sad characteristics of this otherwise progressive age. We are not of those who decry the present and hold up for praise all that is past, but we must say that even the greatest admirers of the nineteenth century will have to admit the existence of these striking deficiencies among the rising generation.

They long for the time when they shall be free from tutelage, released from the natural guardianship of their parents, and at liberty to make their own way, choose their own companions, and follow their own wills. From the age of fifteen to eighteen too many of the youth of both sexes wish to withdraw themselves from parental control, or, if they submit, it is often with ill-grace and constant murmuring. Hence it is now more than ever necessary to hold up for their consideration and imitation that most glorious of all models—Jesus Christ—who went

down to Nazareth and was subject to Mary and Joseph, not merely to the age of sixteen, but, let it be well borne in mind, until He reached his thirtieth year.

When our Lord arrived at a suitable age there is no reason to doubt that He became a willing and dutiful apprentice to Joseph, his foster-father, in his honest, humble trade. We know from Sacred Writ that this was cast up against Him as a reproach by his enemies: "Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary?"* What a sight for men and angels! Jesus, true God and true man, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the mighty universe, earning his bread by the sweat of his sacred brow, and assisting his aged guardian in providing for the wants of the little household by the fruits of his daily, poorly-requited toil. Those sacred hands that could build up millions of worlds more vast and magnificent than the one in which we dwell handled the saw, and the plane, and the other implements used in his humble trade. Well might He exclaim in the words of the Psalmist, "I am poor, and in labours from my youth."†

* Mark, vi. 3. † Ps. lxxxvii. 16.

Our Blessed Saviour loved labour, and by practising it ennobled and sanctified it for evermore. Before his time, servile labour—as the term implies, hard work of any kind—was reserved for slaves, but Christ so blessed it and dignified it that no man should ever be ashamed to do what his Lord and Redeemer disdained not to do—to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow, and to exercise the humble trade of a poor mechanic.

What human pride could possibly stand before such an example of humility? He who possessed infinite riches chose the humblest lot of the children of men for his own; He became poor for our sake; led a common, obscure, despised kind of life, labouring in heat and cold for the merest pittance whereby to sustain nature. No one outside that blessed little household but the angels of God could possibly know the many mortifications and the many privations they had to suffer or undergo. When the venerable Joseph failed in health, or through old age became too weak for arduous labour, the entire responsibility of the family's support rested upon our Blessed Saviour. When there was work to be done He did it willingly and

cheerfully, but it is easy to imagine that in a small country village, a considerable distance from the more busy haunts of men, and more especially among a people easily satisfied with their humble surroundings, constant occupation was not easily to be had; consequently the Holy Family must often have been stinted even as to the very necessaries of life. We may likewise rest assured that, scanty as was their store, no applicant for charity was ever sent away empty from the Lord's humble home in Nazareth.

Although much time had necessarily to be given to labour, yet that labour ceased not to be a continual though silent prayer. The little household had, according to the usual regulations, devotions three times a day, as they were always faithful in complying with all the requirements of Jewish law, for Christ "came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it." According to his custom afterwards in public life, it is not improbable that even in his secluded life He snatched some hours from needed repose to spend them in contemplation and in communion with his Father in heaven. These thirty years of solitude, obscurity, labour, prayer, and meditation were spent as a time of preparation for

his three years of public ministry, beseeching his Father to bless his mission, and render it fruitful in countless souls unto life eternal.

Many beautiful, many useful and precious lessons we can derive from meditating on the hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth. We can thence learn the value of humility, poverty, obedience, self-denial, and lowly station: "For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so do you also."* Perhaps the most striking truth of all that shines forth out of this very darkness in which lies veiled the history of those wonderfully mysterious years is, that high dignity or lofty station is by no means necessary for attaining an eminent degree of holiness. No matter how lowly or obscure our position in life, by simply doing the will of God and being fully resigned to the dispensations of his Divine Providence, we can reach the grade of sanctity He has marked out for us. As St. Gregory of Nyssa declared: "*Suæ quisque vitæ pictor est; colores sunt virtutes: exemplar Christus*"—"Each one is the painter of his own life; the colours to be used are the different

* John, xiii. 15.

virtues, and the model before us is Christ." Most certainly our Lord glorified his Father just as much when He laboured in silence and obscurity at the carpenter's bench as when He gave forth his heavenly teaching from the mount, stilled the tempest, or raised the dead to life. His dispositions were as holy and perfect in the one case as in the other, and his work just as pleasing and acceptable.

True it is that there have been persons in every station, even the most exalted, who have not only saved their souls but also attained a high degree of sanctity, yet our Blessed Saviour wished to impress on our minds that a life of solitude, recollection, and even obscurity, was more conducive to virtue and holiness than the more lofty and public, and consequently more exposed positions of the world. The special graces of the hidden life are all the safer on account of their very hiddenness, as they are not so liable to be poisoned by pride, vanity, or ostentation.

There is too much seeking after notoriety, too much desire of worldly praise and worldly fame, too much regard for human respect, while Christ would wish us to seek for the "better gifts," and aim for higher rewards and purer pleasures

than are to be found in this transitory, probational stage of our existence: "Love not the world nor those things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life."*

"Either Jesus or the world is in error," says St. Bernard, "for they love or reject things directly opposed to each other. Jesus chooses poverty, the world riches; Jesus prefers obedience, the world superiority and independence; Jesus seeks only humiliation and contempt, the world esteem and applause; Jesus sorrow, the world naught but delight. But it is impossible that Jesus should be deceived, since He is the very wisdom of God; then the world must be in delusion, since it takes for good that which is evil, and for evil that which is good, and we cannot possibly approve of its sentiments. Let us, therefore, attach ourselves to those of Jesus in his hidden life; let us consider Him in the workshop of Nazareth, as a master in his chair; let us receive with respect the divine lessons

* 1 John, ii. 15, 16.

which He there gives us, and put them faithfully into practice."*

The wonders of the supernatural life are generally to be found among the poor, the lowly, the afflicted, the unknown and despised ones of this world. No one knows this better than, in fact, no one can know it so well as the Catholic priest. It is not the deeds that are emblazoned before the world that are handed down in the annals of history, and that seem to constitute the glory of nations—great victories and conquests—that count for much in the sight of God, that will merit the smile and the honours of heaven, but humble lives and lives of devotedness and self-sacrifice.

The Catholic Church gladly acknowledges this fact, and hence it is that she sets apart one day of the year and makes it the great feast of "All Saints," to do honour to those countless blessed ones who, when they lived upon earth, were unknown, whose names figure not on any calendar, and yet who have attained the imperishable crown of the elect of God.

It is a great comfort and consolation for us,

* M. l'Abbé Gosselin, *Instr. sur les Fêtes.*

poor wayfarers, to know that no matter how lowly our position may be now, and how soon, and very soon, the fickle world may forget us, if we perform with a view simply to please God the various unostentatious duties of the station in which He has placed us, we too shall be numbered among those holy ones whose canonisation is celebrated only on the eternal shore.

Happily, then, our sanctification does not depend on the performance of great deeds, deeds of heroism that attract the attention of the multitude and receive their reward in its praises, but in strict fidelity to the responsibilities of our vocation in life. Actions that astonish the world by their grandeur and nobility may not be looked upon with favour by the Almighty by reason of the absence of high or holy motives. If done out of vanity or pride, merely to gain a name or to acquire fame and popularity, they may get what they seek, but deserve no more—not surely a supernatural recompense. While, on the contrary, actions apparently the most insignificant, such as a cup of cold water given in the name of Christ, or even "in the name of a disciple," shall not pass without a reward in the life that is to come.

It is not, therefore, the seeming greatness or smallness of an action, but the motive that inspires it, that gives to any deed its true and proper value in the eyes of God. Everything depends on the degree of love with which we are animated. The higher the motive the nobler the action. The more we love God the more will the performance of even our simplest duties please Him.

Whatever is actuated or inspired by a supernatural motive, that alone is worthy of a supernatural reward. Even the actions that we are obliged to perform, that are demanded by our calling, we may offer up each morning to God for the intentions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and thus accumulate a store of merits that will most agreeably surprise us on the very threshold of eternity.

Let persons say what they will of the wickedness of the age—there is undoubtedly plenty of it and too much—yet, at the same time, there is no small amount, thanks to God's grace, of true, solid Christian heroism. The faithful are not called upon now, as formerly, to lay their heads upon the block, to suffer most cruel torments and an agonising death for the sake of

their religion, yet there are not a few examples in almost every community of that calm, silent, slow, but never-ceasing martyrdom which is prolonged through a weary life and ends only in death.

Many a mother leads that life, and every breath she draws is one of self-sacrifice, one of perfect, entire devotedness, without a ray of sunshine to alleviate the gloom. She buries her secret sorrow in her inmost heart, or, if she disclose it, it is only to God's anointed servant, and she goes to the grave still hoping, still trusting in the Lord that her hope will not be confounded.

There are heroes and heroines in every age of the Church, and of the purest and noblest type, but the bustling world knows nothing of them. It may behold the placid, patient face, the sweet, tender smile, but it does not, cannot know the heavy cross those frail shoulders are carrying through life—with those weary feet walking in the well-marked footprints of the Saviour.

He is the model of the poor, the lowly, the suffering, of those who bear the marks of the world's neglect, whose lives are hidden with Christ in God, and whose consolation and

strength are to be found in closely imitating those eminent virtues which Jesus practised at Nazareth—that veiled life the unravelling of whose wonders and mysteries will constitute one of the most delightful occupations of eternity.

Unfolding His Mission.

THIRTY years Christ spent in retirement and obscurity, in silent preparation for his public ministry—thirty years of prayer, labour, and mortification. He reserved but three for the fulfilment of his mission; but what an immense work He accomplished in that short time!—a far greater, nobler, holier work than the creations of the seven days, as mentioned in the book of Genesis.

What a fruitful ministry was then inaugurated!—a ministry whose beneficial effects extend to all regions of the earth, and grow stronger in influence as the ages become older. A new creation, one of a higher order, then took place. It was to come forth from three years of arduous labour, unceasing toil, restless energy,

ever-growing obstacles and difficulties, full days and sleepless nights.

Christ bade farewell to his humble home and relatives in the flesh, feeling that the hour had come for manifesting Himself to the world and for giving to the sinful human race his Father's message. But even at this critical period He waited in obedience until He should be recognised by his Father's messenger, Blessed John Baptist, who was sanctified in his mother's womb and elevated to an eminent degree of holiness, in order that he might become a worthy forerunner of the Messias: "This is he who was spoken of by Isaias the prophet, saying: A voice of one crying in the desert, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."* What a great saint was John the Baptist our Saviour clearly intimates: "Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: What went you into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold, they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to

* Matt. iii. 3.

see? a prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: Behold, I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before Thee. Amen, I say to you, there hath not arisen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist."*

St. John lived a most mortified life, kept entirely aloof from the world and all its pleasures, and was in daily expectation of the Messias, for whom he was gradually to prepare the way by preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins. From his own declaration he knew not the Lord until he received the clearest light from heaven by an unmistakable sign which was given him. The Pharisees had objected to St. John: "Why, then, dost thou baptise, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? John answered them saying I baptise with water; but there hath stood One in the midst of you, whom you know not. The same is He that shall come after me, who is preferred before me; the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose." Then St. John gave

* Ibid. xi. 7-11.

out his glorious testimony in clear, ringing words that have prolonged their echo into every age and are daily repeated in the Church of God: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." "And John gave testimony, saying: I saw the Spirit coming down as a dove from heaven, and He remained upon Him. And I knew him not; but He who sent me to baptise with water saith to me: He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, He it is that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and I gave testimony, that this is the Son of God."*

Nothing could be more beautiful, more touching, or more effective than the last testimony of the Baptist to his Master, when there arose a feeling of jealousy among his own immediate followers on account of seeing that Christ attracted the greater multitude. "And they came to John, and said to him: Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony, behold He baptiseth, and all men come to Him. John answered and said: A man cannot receive anything, unless it be

* John, i. 25-34.

given him from heaven. You yourselves do bear me witness that I said I am not Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all. He that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh. He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that He testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God doth not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son, and He hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth in the Son hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

With this grand introduction of his Master St. John the Baptist recedes from view until

* John iii. 26-36.

his glorious martyrdom, and Jesus Christ enters upon his mission to mankind. He opened that mission by the performance of his first miracle —the changing of water into wine at the marriage-feast of Cana; and this, be it well remembered, at the special request of his Virgin Mother, although, as He declared, his hour had not yet come. By this display of divine power "He manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in Him."*

In order to be received as a heavenly messenger it was necessary that He should show his credentials, and this He did by the manifestation of that boundless power which was inherent to his person. Striking as was this first miracle of our Saviour, not less so, from another point of view, was his first public appearance before his fellow-citizens at Nazareth, and his discourse to them on the Sabbath day, when "the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him," and "they wondered at the words of grace that proceeded from his mouth." The text He chose on that occasion was the text of his public life and mission, which needed no other

* John, ii. 11.

introduction: "And He came to Nazareth, where He was brought up; and he went into the synagogue according to his custom on the Sabbath day, and He rose up to read. And the book of Isaias the prophet was delivered unto Him. And as He unfolded the book He found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; wherefore He hath anointed me, to preach the Gospel to the poor, He hath sent me, to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward."*

Notwithstanding "they wondered," yet when He brought the truth home to their own hearts in words that laid bare their own sad deficiencies they would listen no longer: they cast Him out of the synagogue and "thrust Him out of the city; and they brought Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong." Truly, as He himself declared, "no prophet is accepted in his own country."

* Luke, iv. 16-19.

The text which our Saviour chose on that grave occasion was a key to all the active works of his divine ministry, to his deeds of mercy, and to the subject-matter of all his discourses: "To preach the Gospel to the poor He hath sent me, to heal the contrite of heart." Knowing the weakness of men, that they are more moved by what first appeals to their senses, in order to convince them of his higher mission—the salvation of souls—He stooped to render them aid in necessities of a lower order.

He had a true, sincere, tender and deep compassion for men in all their afflictions. No wonder, then, that "all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them to Him. But He, laying his hands on every one of them, healed them."* This is the constant record of all his journeys: "He went about doing good." No matter what the complaint or affliction, no matter how naturally incurable the sickness or hopeless the case, the great Physician was at hand, and no one who approached Him with faith returned home with prayer unanswered.

All diseases fled at his sacred touch—fever

* Luke, iv. 40.

vanished before his presence, issues of blood suddenly stopped, the blind saw, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the dead rose again, the poor had the Gospel preached to them.

He cleanses lepers by the mere expression of his will, and sends them back to the society of their fellow-men. He restores strength to palsied limbs, casts out devils from numbers of the possessed, heals the centurion's servant, raises to life the ruler's daughter, and gives back unto the arms of the poor weeping widow her only son, the staff and support of her declining years. Truly "hath He borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," for He came not only to rescue men from eternal misery, but also to better their condition in this world by teaching the value of human life, the sanctity of manhood, even in its weakest, humblest form, and the principle of universal brotherhood without distinction of race, colour, or condition.

Although the primary object of his coming on earth was to reconcile mankind to God and to offer a superabundant atonement for all their offences, yet the natural consequences of his teaching tended to elevate society from its truly

degraded condition, and to place it on the way to the attainment of a higher and purer civilisation than it could ever reach if left to its own strength and resources.

Need we wonder, then, that the multitude followed Him and hung upon his every word? —for He taught "as one having authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees."* They knew and they felt that He was no common teacher, no mere interpreter of the law, but that He was endowed with full authority from on high. For "never man spake as He spake," in his own name and with supreme power and authority.

He came, as He Himself declared, "to preach the Gospel to the poor:" and this, surely, was a proof of his divine mission, for it was godlike to seek out the distressed, the poverty-stricken, the enslaved, the oppressed, the despised ones of this world. To none of this class did the great philosophers ever preach; they would disdain to stoop so low as to instruct the poor neglected children of men. Their teaching was only for the benefit of the high in station, the

* Matt. vii. 29.

cultivated and refined, who would repay their services by abundant praise and lofty consideration, or by more tangible proofs of appreciation. Their motto was that of the pagan poet:

"Odi profanum vulgus et arceo"

—"I hate the common rabble and I keep them at a distance." Side by side with such a sentiment, indicative of the civilisation of heathendom, we may place in striking contrast the utterance of Jesus, the Saviour of fallen man: "Come to me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."*

To the poor, who composed and always will compose the vast majority of the human race, their Deliverer had come. To them the Gospel of the kingdom, bringing the glad tidings of salvation, was first to be preached. They were no longer to be left in ignorance, for on them the Light of the world was to shine—not to dazzle or bewilder, but with a calm, steady, penetrating ray that would dispel all darkness

* Matt. xi. 28.

of the mind and illuminate the soul in its journey to eternity.

Truly "never did man speak like this Man."* The greatest truths He gave forth in simplest language. He laboured only to instruct, to convince, to move. The "people were in admiration at his doctrine." Every word He uttered had its special weight, every sentence was pregnant with deepest force and meaning. He used not the lofty nor "persuasive words of human wisdom," but wonderfully adapted Himself to the limited intelligence of his hearers. He selected his figures from the everyday occurrences of life, the homely customs of the people, and the manner of speaking common to dwellers in the East. He generally clothed his instructions in the form of parables. "Without parables He spoke not unto them." This mode of speech was simple yet attractive, more apt to leave a lasting impression on the mind.

Plain and familiar was his style. Never from the creation was such sublime teaching given to the world; and the world, even though it failed to practise it, has never ceased to extol it as the

* John, vii. 46.

highest conception of heaven-inspired doctrine. The most exalted attainable wisdom is to be found in Christ's sermon on the mount; the purest morality and loftiest spirituality. Therein we find not only the ordinary obligations of Christian life, but, for those who aspire to a holier state, the more advanced counsels of perfection.

He preached consummate purity not only of body but of mind and thought, and held up to our imitation God Himself: "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your Father in heaven is perfect."* He demanded as an essential condition for our own pardon before God that we should forgive others their offences against ourselves; and accordingly as we measured unto others, so it would be measured unto us again. He laid down the grandest and at the same time the safest principle for social intercourse: "Whatever you should wish that men should do unto you, do you unto them." Even in the very form of prayer that He prescribed for us, and which it was his wish that we oftentimes should repeat, the "Our Father," containing

* Matt. v. 48.

as it does, petitions for all necessaries of soul and body, by the very word "our" he showed the equality of men, and founded the brotherhood of humanity.

Then that charity whose breadth, depth, and intensity could have been conceived only by a Divine Law-giver, He most earnestly desired should be forever the distinctive mark or characteristic of all who should ever lay claim to the title of his followers: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." For fear they might ever lose sight of this greatest of Christian laws, He still further strengthened it by the solemn declaration that whatever kindness, mercy, love, or compassion they might ever show to any of their fellow-mortals, even the poorest and humblest, He would consider as shown unto Himself: "And when the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of his majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the

King say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Then shall the just answer Him, saying: Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee; thirsty, and gave Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and covered Thee? Or whed did we see Thee sick or in prison, and came to Thee? And the King, answering, shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."*

This utterance, infinitely worthy of a Father and a Redeemer, laid the foundation of that wonderful Christian benevolence and Christian charity which have covered the civilised world with hospitals for the sick, asylums for the orphans, the blind, and the crippled, and institu-

* Matt. xxv. 31-40.

tions for the alleviation of every human misery and affliction. This declaration of Christ has done more than aught else, than all human influences combined, to elevate the condition of the poor, to alleviate the condition of the helpless and unfortunate, and to unrivet the shackles of the slave.

Mr. Lecky, the great rationalist and well-known author of the "History of European Morals," gives very remarkable testimony on this point: "The influence of Christianity upon slavery, by inclining the moral type to the servile classes, though less obvious and less discussed than some others, is, I believe, in the very highest degree important. There is probably scarcely any other single circumstance that exercises so profound an influence upon the social and political relations of a religion as the class-type with which it can most readily assimilate; or, in other words, the group or variety of virtues to which it gives the foremost place. The virtues that are most suited to the servile position were in general so little honoured by antiquity that they were not even cultivated in their appropriate sphere. The aspirations of good men were in a different direction. The

virtue of the Stoic, which rose triumphantly under adversity, nearly always withered under degradation. For the first time, under the influence of Christianity, a great moral movement passed through the servile class. The multitude of slaves who embraced the new faith was one of the reproaches of the pagans; and the names of Blandina, Potamiæna, Eutyches, Victorinus, and Nereus show how fully they shared in the sufferings and in the glory of martyrdom. The first and grandest edifice of Byzantine architecture in Italy—the noble Church of St. Vital at Ravenna—was dedicated by Justinian to the memory of a martyred slave.

"While Christianity thus broke down the contempt with which the master had regarded his slaves, and planted among the latter a principle of moral regeneration which expanded in no other sphere with an equal perfection, its action in procuring the freedom of the slave was unceasing. The law of Constantine which placed the ceremony under the superintendence of the clergy, and the many laws that gave special facilities of manumission to those who desired to enter the monasteries or the priesthood, symbolised the religious character the act had

assumed. It was celebrated on Church festivals, especially at Easter; and, although it was not proclaimed as a matter of duty or necessity, it was always regarded as one of the most acceptable modes of expiating past sins. St. Melania was said to have emancipated eight thousand slaves; St. Ovidius, a rich martyr of Gaul, five thousand; Chromatius, a Roman prefect under Diocletian, fourteen hundred; Hermes; a prefect in the reign of Trajan, twelve hundred and fifty. Pope St. Gregory, many of the clergy at Hippo under the rule of St. Augustine, as well as great numbers of private individuals, freed their slaves as an act of piety."* This clear testimony from a writer certainly not biassed in favour of the Christian Church shows most conclusively the wonderful effects on the welfare of mankind that followed from the humane teaching of the Redeemer.

Not only the evils of slavery were mitigated, and slavery itself gradually abolished through the all-pervading influence of Christ's spirit, but a number of other priceless advantages in the order of nature were bestowed upon man-

* Vol. ii., p. 69, "European Morals."

kind. Woman was rescued from the degraded state in which pagan antiquity had placed her, and was elevated to her rightful and honourable position in society. The love which all Christians bore to the Mother of Jesus did more than anything else to produce this desirable effect, and, added to this, the tenderness of the God-Man Himself, even to the fallen but repentant ones of the weaker sex, invested womanhood with a dignity and a sacredness that were before unknown to the world, and gave new charms to human intercourse.

The Spirit of Christ mitigated the evils of war, inculcated mercy to captives, tended to weaken the antagonism of nations, and has been the origin of all that is highest and purest in present civilization. Even those who have cast aside their belief in Christianity are yet under its benign influence, and, do what they will, they cannot totally sever themselves from it, for it is in the very air they breathe. Whatever is good in their nature or noble in their sentiments—mixed as these sentiments are with Christian principles—they have derived, ungrateful as they are, from ancestors who had the faith. To take away from present civilisa-

tion all that is the product of Christ and his Spirit, handed down through the ages of faith, would be to leave it barren of all that is most worthy of the consideration of right-thinking men.

As W. H. Mallock, one of the most distinguished non-catholic writers of the present day, says in his remarkable book entitled, "Is Life worth Living?" "To cleanse life of religion is not so simple a process as they seem to fancy it. Its actual dogmas may be readily put away from us; not so the effect which these dogmas have worked during the course of centuries. In disguised forms they are around us everywhere; they confront us in every human interest, in every human pleasure. They have beaten themselves into life; they have eaten their way into it. Like a secret sap they have flavoured every fruit in the garden. They are like a powerful drug, a stimulant, that has been injected into our whole system."

Such was but a part of the wonderful influence of the teaching of Jesus on the welfare of the human race, the effect of the outpouring of his spirit over the face of the earth. How those among his hearers who were sincere and pure-

minded must have drunk in, with spiritual relish, every word that fell from the sacred lips of the Master! No wonder the multitudes pressed upon Him; no wonder that they followed Him into the desert places and were forgetful even of their daily necessities: they forgot to eat and forgot to drink, and neglected to bring with them their usual provisions, so anxious were they to hear the words of heavenly wisdom that were spoken by the teacher of men.

What a grand school was that in which the apostles received their instruction, where both theory and practice of the highest conceivable kind were combined, where the Lawgiver Himself laid down the laws, explained their meaning, and gave, in his own actions, their most perfect exemplification!

The three years of Christ's public ministry were the three years of seminary life of the apostolic band. It was then they were being trained for their most holy calling. Never was teacher more indulgent. The apostles were illiterate men, rude of speech, rough of manners, and very slow of understanding. What infinite patience did not Christ exercise in their regard! They were not as yet sufficiently spiritual-

minded to perceive the meaning of many of his utterances; and even some of the parables which He gave forth in public, and which appear clear and simple, He was obliged to explain to the Apostles in private. How often He had to check the faithful but impetuous Peter, to restrain the imprudent zeal of James and John, and to pass over in silence the evergrowing infidelity of avaricious Judas!

Such were the pupils, such the school, and such the Master. Many lessons He gave them which they never could fully understand until the day on which the Holy Spirit was to descend upon them, remove the clouds from their minds, and enlighten them with his own superior light. Many lessons they were yet to learn through their trials, their sorrows, their labours, and afflictions. During those three years they went through their seminary course; from the Resurrection until the Ascension of Christ they spent in spiritual retreat, and on the day of Pentecost they received their last, most solemn consecration. Our Blessed Saviour gradually prepared them for the divine work which He came upon earth to establish on a firm, unfailing basis, and which they and their legitimate successors were to continue until time should be no more.

To understand this as we should it is necessary to recall to mind the great objects the Divine Word had in view when He condescended to become incarnate. He came to satisfy for the sins of the whole human race, to remove the eternal curse that weighed upon them, to open the gates of heaven, that had remained closed against all the children of men since the fall of their primeval progenitors, and to place them on the sure road to eternal life. He came, not merely for the sake of those who listened to his voice or lived in his time, but for all generations.

The infinite merits which He acquired by his labours, suffering, and death He placed in a depository of his own choosing, and that depository is the Holy Catholic Church. Although His satisfactions are more than sufficent for the sins of all mankind, yet it is necessary that his merits should be applied to each individual soul. This can only be done through our own co-operation. God has so ordained. He most certainly will not save us in spite of ourselves. We must add our efforts to his labours, in order to show our good-will and how much we appreciate his work and merciful condescension,

Hence we must apply his merits to ourselves, and in the manner that He has pointed out. Accepting his gifts, we can receive them only on his conditions. What, then, are his conditions? That we should be faithful members of the Church which He established. What is its ground of authority? "He that heareth you," Christ says to the divinely-appointed ministers of that Church, "heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me."* He has made it, if possible, still stronger: "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."†

What other meaning can be attached to "hearing the Church," if it be not to submit ourselves entirely to its control in all things pertaining to faith and morals; that is, to submit our intellect to all the truths which it teaches, to submit our will to all that it commands; the submission of the entire man? But "this saying is hard, and who can believe it?" It appears hard, but when properly explained it is not so very difficult.

If we were required to believe a Church that

* Luke, x. 16. † Matt. xviii. 17.

was liable to error, that would give forth false doctrine, it would indeed be hard and very unreasonable; but when we know and have God's word for it that such can never happen, then our minds ought to be at rest and to have no fear of going astray. Jesus Christ promised to be with his Church "all days, even unto the consummation of the world."* "All days," then in the history of the Church there never was, there never shall be, a time when He will be absent from it; and absent from it He certainly would be if it ever taught, even for a moment, what was not true.

What, then, sustains the Catholic Church? The never-failing power of Christ, the never-failing light of his Holy Spirit. The Divine Saviour of men made three most solemn promises: 1st. That He would be with his Church for ever: "Behold, I am with you all days;" 2nd. That He would send his Holy Spirit, who would teach the Church all truth and abide with her for ever: "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever:" "He will teach you all things;"† and 3rd, That "the gates of hell shall never prevail against it."‡

* Matt. xxviii. 20. † John, xiv. 16,26. ‡ Matt. xvi. 18.

We have, therefore, the solemn promises of Jesus Christ that He will be always with his Church, directing, guiding, and enlightening it, preserving it from every form of error and heresy, and shielding it against all the machinations of earth and hell.

The promises, then, are clear. Was the one who made them able to fulfil them? If you answer in the affirmative, then the Catholic Church is now what she always claimed to be, the one, stainless spouse of Christ, "the pillar and ground of truth."* If, on the contrary, you answer that Christ did not fulfil his promises, that He was unable or unwilling, then all Christianity falls to the ground as the greatest of impostures. Reaching this point, in order to be logical, you should go still further. If Christianity be a failure or an imposition, then there is no God who has a right to our worship. For a God who would permit such a one as Christ to exist and to exercise such an almighty power as He actually used, and all this merely to impose on so many generations of the wisest and best of men, such a divinity would not be worthy

* 1 Tim. iii. 15.

of our adoration. To suppose a God wanting in goodness, mercy, or justice is really to suppose his non-existence, and thus by very easy grades you reach atheism:

> "Facilis descensus Averni;
> Sed revocare gradum, superasque evedere ad auras,
> Hoc opus, hic labor est,"

as Virgil says: "The descent into hell is easy, but to retrace one's steps and reascend to the upper regions—this is where the labour and difficulty are to be found." Thus it is that the intellectual men of the age are tending to either one of two directions: their faces hopefully turned towards Rome or hopelessly turned towards blank infidelity or scepticism. As Lecky says: "Whatever is lost by Catholicism is gained by rationalism; wherever the spirit of rationalism recedes the spirit of Catholicism advances."

The great obstacle in the way of intellectual men is pride. They do not wish to submit their minds to any system of religion in which there are mysteries above their comprehension. But no faith can exist without mystery. We admit that the mysteries of religion are above the reach of our reason, but they are by no means opposed

to it. There are truths of a natural order and truths of a supernatural order, but they cannot possibly contradict one another, for God is the Author of both. Does it not stand to reason and common sense that there must be a great number of truths of an order transcending the reach of our limited powers and which are known only to God? He is certainly free to communicate unto us such of them as He pleases, and at the same time clothe them with a veil of mystery in order to exercise us in humility and try our obedience. For pride is specially hateful to God, and He punished it with great severity in Lucifer and those wonderfully bright intelligences that fell from heaven in consequence.

God has an absolute right to demand the submission of our intellects as well as of our wills. All we have to know is simply this: Has God revealed such a truth or such a system of truths? Whether we understand or not the *how* or the *wherefore*, it is our duty to bow down and adore. To do this the Almighty has left every man "in the hands of his own counsel." He is free to submit or not to submit; but he must abide by the consequences of his own choice.

Many of the noblest intellects that the world has ever seen have bowed down and adored, and felt that they were specially blessed in so doing. St. Augustine was the grandest example in former times, and in our own day we have a Newman and a Brownson, a Manning and an Allies, a Hewit and a Hecker, not to mention a host of other by no means inferior lights in the world of letters and science.

Have their intellects been enslaved, has their genius been fettered, their ardour for learning been quenched, or their highest aspirations been checked by their entrance into the Church of Ages? "As well might it be said," declares the learned Spanish philosopher Balmes, "that the mariner is fettered by the compass that guides him in safety over the wide expanse of waters."

The great want of the age is stable authority in matters of faith and doctrine, and it is a fact, becoming more and more patent to all, that it can be found only in the Catholic Church. Until quite recently the Bible was the sole acknowledged authority in matters of belief for all the different Protestant denominations. But even on that they are fast losing their hold, and

with a sadly increasing number of their members, it no longer possesses its former influence or undisputed authority. By a very large majority of Protestants the King James Version of the Bible was worshipped even to the very letter; but what was their dismay when they were told by the most learned members of their communion that it contained thousands of errors and mistranslations, many of which were of no small importance! So now they have a "new version," which is, without doubt, a vast improvement, in point of accuracy, over the former; yet this fact is not sufficent to re-establish the people in their once undisturbed confidence.

In fact, their confidence is rapidly diminishing. It is now known that many of the changes insisted on by the members of the American committee were not adopted by their English *confrères*, but quietly relegated to marginal or foot notes. This does not satisfy the American public. They must have a Bible with the alterations suggested by their own learned divines inserted in the text, with those of the English revisers placed at the side. At the moment I am writing it is asserted that the Baptists are not content with either, and are determined to have a version

of their own that will hold fast to the idea of "immersion." Nor is it likely that revisions will stop here, but rather continue *ad infinitum*. It is not highly improbable that some wealthy capitalists may determine to have a version suitable to *their* tastes, in which shall be omitted such-like *intolerable* sentences as that ascribed to our Saviour: "It is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to enter the eye of an needle."

Surely Jesus Christ never intended that the human race, whom He came to save, should be thus cast about on the sea of doubt or "tossed about by every wind of doctrine." It was most certainly not in accordance with his wishes that they should be without a fixed guide, without a sure anchor, and left to the remorseless fury of the waves of error and heresy.

If every man be entirely free to embrace any kind of error or inconsistency, and to reject any doctrine or system of doctrines, no matter howsoever true or firmly established, there was no need of God becoming incarnate. But such an idea is absolutely repugnant to the wisdom of the Most High. Having come, at infinite cost, to open the road and show the way, we

are not, cannot be, free to choose any other road but the one that He traced out and marked with his Precious Blood. It is true that all roads lead to eternity, but there is an eternity of misery as well as an eternity of happiness, into either of which we must pass. He Himself tells us there are two different roads, one, indeed, very strait and narrow, that "leadeth to life, and few there are who find it," and the other the broad road that "leadeth to destruction, and many there are who enter thereat."

There is a false spirit of liberality in the atmosphere of this nineteenth century which is doing a vast amount of injury to souls. It is an excellent thing, it is even a strict duty enjoined on us by our holy religion, to be kind and charitable to our neighbours, even to those who differ from us as to faith. We should be tolerant of persons in error, not of errors themselves. We should embrace all in the charity of Jesus Christ and be willing to do them any service in our power. But this true Christian spirit does not require that we should be indulgent to error or heresy considered in themselves.

Truth is necessarily intolerant of error, but

they who possess the truth should not hate, bear ill-will, or persecute. God Himself intensely detests all kinds of error, falsehood, and heresy,. They are absolutely repugnant to his divine nature. God is essentially one, his truth is one, his Church is one. There can be but one system of divine truth, and that truth can never change. Therefore God cannot approve of two different churches, much less of a thousand.

In this age the greatest of dangers is to think lightly of *heresy*. It is abhorrent to God, and when *wilful* it must necessarily be a great sin, one of the greatest of which a man can be guilty; in fact, it is *the* sin against the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of Eternal Truth. As long as a man perseveres in it there is no possible hope of salvation. The longer he abides in that state the less desire will he have to leave it, and the more the danger of final impenitence increases.

That there is no small number of people in this unfortunate condition we have no reason to doubt. How many that are convinced that the Catholic Church is the only true Church of Christ, that they in conscience should enter it, and yet they do not! Human respect, the

fear of losing caste in society, influence of station in life, the emoluments of their profession, or the dread of the checks that they would necessarily have to impose on their passions to live up to the requirements of Catholic faith, are the chief obstacles or stumbling-blocks in the way of many desiring to enter the true fold.

The writer is not simply making assertions for he knows whereof he speaks. He has received from not a few outside the Church in private, friendly intercourse, and sometimes even by letter, clear, straightforward admission of this kind, and he doubts not that other clergymen could testify to the same from their own experience. While there is life there is hope, and for such all we can do is to pray, and to pray fervently. But they should meditate on that terrible sentence of the Lord: "He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven."*

We should, then, hate heresy with all our soul, but we should not hate heretics. This is a great but necessary distinction. We charitably trust that a large majority of those outside the Church are in perfect good faith or invincible

* Matt. x. 33.

ignorance. It is more the fault of their not very distant ancestors than of themselves. They have not voluntarily renounced the faith, but have been cruelly robbed of it. Instead of bearing dislike to them for not belonging to our fold, we ought rather to mourn for their loss and do everything in our power, by prayer, kind words, the loan of instructive Catholic books, and, above all, by our own good and pure example, to help them return to the safe road from which they have so far strayed.

How many amongst them there are who, if they but knew the Catholic Church as it is, in all its divine beauty and loveliness, would gladly embrace it at any risk or sacrifice, and even die for it! As a historical fact, the grandest and most striking of all ever recorded in the annals of the human race, by reason of its antiquity and stability, it deserves to be studied. Nothing can possibly be more interesting or more fruitful than an examination of its doctrines, but these must not be taken on hearsay, or from the assertions of its enemies, but from authoritative sources, or from works duly approved by its recognised prelates.

You may spend many long years in becoming

acquainted with its teaching, and still only begin to know but a part of its comprehensive truth, and obtain only faint glimpses of that beauty which is reflected from the face of God. It alone fully satisfies, as far as man can possibly be satisfied here below, all the wants and desires of his complex nature.

It replenishes the intellect with the loftiest and most sublime truths, and ravishes the heart and its affections with the deepest love. Without changing its nature it accommodates itself to all countries, times, and individuals. As Cardinal Newman eloquently remarks: "Not the highest in rank, not the meanest, not the most refined, not the rudest, is beyond the influence of the Church; she includes specimens of every class among her children. She is the solace of the forlorn, the chastener of the prosperous, and the guide of the wayward. She keeps a mother's eye for the innocent, bears a heavy hand upon the wanton, and has a voice of majesty for the proud. She opens the mind of the ignorant and she prostrates the intellect of even the most gifted. These are not words: she has done it, she does it still, she undertakes to do it. All she asks is an open field and freedom to act."

How many there are in the different Protestant communions who, with their high principle, their strict probity, their clear, candid minds, their open, generous hearts, if they but had the superabundant means of grace to be found in the sacraments of holy Mother Church, would reach a high degree of Christian perfection! If so *naturally* good now, how *supernaturally* good they would then become!

What a grand field for faith's conquest!—none grander, none so grand, in my humble opinion, as in this great republic and among its noble people. It is already white for the harvest. God grant us, in the name of his Divine Son and through the intercession of his Immaculate Mother, the Patroness of these United States, a goodly number of the right kind of labourers for this his vineyard—learned, pious, and self-sacrificing priests, who will reap the ripe fruit that but awaits their gathering!

Love's Banquet.

THE love of Jesus for mankind knows no limit. No created mind, not even the intelligence of the highest of the seraphim, could ever conceive the extent to which the Lord has carried it. No wonder our reason is overwhelmed at the very thought of the goodness of God. It is simply immeasurable. The very fact of the Incarnation itself—of a God condescending so infinitely as to stoop to assume our frail nature—is something truly astounding; but the Blessed Sacrament goes far beyond this, and in its excess of goodness almost bewilders us.

The institution of the Eucharist is the complement of the Incarnation;—in fact it is a never-ceasing Incarnation. Had not our

Blessed Saviour given us this great Sacrament Christians would be obliged to live altogether in the past, to feed on its holy memories, to recall the mind oftentimes to Him who, eighteen hundred years ago and more, walked the sea, calmed the tempests, brought the dead to life, preached the Gospel to the poor, and healed the contrite of heart.

But now we need not go back to the dim past, for we have the same loving Redeemer with us still. He yet abides with us and has made his tabernacle among us. He is never absent from our altars, where all who wish may seek Him, and, seeking Him, always find Him ready to hear their petitions, to console them in their afflictions and strengthen them in the time of temptation.

After the death and ascension of our Lord nothing else could possibly have tempered the grief of the apostles or brought them comfort in their great sorrow but the Blessed Sacrament. It was the only healing balm for their breaking hearts. From it they drew strength for their conflicts and courage to confess their Master openly at any sacrifice, even to the facin o death itself.

About a year before the last Passover Jesus promised, in the clearest possible manner, this greatest of all gifts to his followers. It was on that solemn occasion when He performed the wonderful miracle of so multiplying five loaves and fishes as to satisfy the hunger of five thousand men, not counting the women and children, who must have numbered some thousand more; and yet there were twelve baskets of fragments taken up and reserved for future use. No moment could have been more favourable for the announcing of any doctrine which He might have wished to communicate. The immense multitude were deeply moved by his display of almighty power, and so much impressed were they that they wished to take Him by force and make Him their king.

The multiplication of corporal food was an excellent figure of the multiplication of food for the soul, such as He was to accomplish in the Sacrament of his love. The working of this great miracle furnished the people with a sufficiently strong basis whereon to build their faith in all that He would see fit to teach them.

He then prepared them for the wonderful gift

He had in store for them by recalling their minds to a miracle of the far past, when his Eternal Father gave them food from heaven—the manna—which was but a faint type or figure of that which He was then about to solemnly promise them:

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any men eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How can this man gives us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my Flesh is meat indeed, and my Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood, abideth in me and I in him."*

John, vi. 48-58.

There is nothing in human language clearer or more emphatic than the words our Saviour used on this occasion. He announced most solemnly that He would give them his Flesh to eat and his Blood to drink. There was no figure of speech in this, for He again and again repeated it, and each time more strongly, if possible, than before. They murmured, they resisted with all their might; they objected in no ambiguous terms "How can this man give us his Flesh to eat?" Our Saviour heard their murmurs and listened to their objections, and yet, with all the strength of his divine will, insisted that He not only meant what He said, but that if they were resolved not to believe, and thus determined upon refusing this most precious boon, remaining in their obstincy and abstaining from the spiritual food He had so lovingly in store for them, they would never enjoy eternal life and happiness. This He declared in the most solemn manner, with the strongest kind of asseveration: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, you shall not have life in you." The revised Protestant version is substantially the same: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh

of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him."

That the multitude understood his words there can be no doubt, for they murmured loudly, as also did many of his disciples: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" Had not Christ intended that his words should be taken literally, He certainly owed it to his audi ence and to the whole world to explain Himself, and thus remove an otherwise inevitable misconception.

The character of our Lord was entirely consistent throughout his short but most eventful life. We know that He was all goodness, kindness, and charity; that He would not "break the bruised reed," nor "quench the smoking flax." Whenever He was misunderstood by the people He explained away their misconceptions; and this care He exercised more especially with regard to his apostles, to whom He said: "To you it is given to know the mysteries

of the kingdom of heaven."* Yet neither in private nor in public, neither to the populace nor to his disciples, did He ever change one word with regard to this doctrine, nor did He ever intimate that He spoke only in figure. He clearly perceived the sense in which his words were taken. He saw that even his disciples had the like understanding, and that many of them would for ever abandon his service in consequence, and yet He never uttered a word to recall them; and this in mercy He should have done if He meant his words to be accepted simply in a figurative sense. As "He knew all things," He certainly foresaw the future—that the Church which He came to found would in all ages receive his words in their obvious, literal sense; and if this were not his intention it would be highly inconsistent with our ideas of his divine character to believe that He would permit so many generations of faithful Christians to be hopelessly led astray on a matter of such great moment when a few words from his sacred lips would have removed even the shadow of a difficulty. Yet He changed not his declarations, but made them

* Matt. xiii. 11.

as strong and emphatic as the nature of human language would admit; and He intimated, as another proof of the reliance they should have on his words, that He would ascend to where He was before, his own eternal home. "But Jesus knowing in Himself that his disciples murmured at this, said to them: Doth this scandalise you? If, then, you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."* As this last line of the text is often misunderstood and as often misquoted (even by such a distinguished writer as the late Dean Stanley in his last work, entitled "Christian Institutions"), it will not be out of place to give here its explanation as rendered by the great St. Augustine: "What, then, is the meaning of the words which He adds, *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing?* Let us say to Him: 'O Lord, good Master, how does the flesh profit nothing, when Thou hast said, *Except a man eat my flesh, he shall not have life in him?* Does, then, life profit nothing? And wherefore are we what we are, but that we may have life eternal,

* John, vi. 62-65.

which Thou dost promise with thy Flesh? What, then, is this: *the flesh profiteth nothing?* It profiteth nothing, indeed, in the sense in which they understood it; for they understood it of flesh as it is torn to pieces in a carcass or is sold in the shambles, not as it is animated by the Spirit. Wherefore it is said that 'the flesh profiteth nothing;' in the same manner as it is said that 'knowledge puffeth up.' Then ought we at once to hate knowledge? God forbid! And what means 'knowledge puffeth up?' Knowledge alone, without charity. Therefore, he added, 'but charity edifieth.' Therefore add thou to knowledge charity, and knowledge will be profitable, not by itself but through charity. So also here 'the flesh profiteth nothing' only when alone. Let the Spirit be added to the flesh, as charity is added to knowledge and it profiteth very much. For if the flesh profiteth nothing the Word would not be made flesh to dwell among us."*

"After this many of his disciples went back and walked no more with Him." Then He, in sadness, turned towards the apostles and re-

* Tract. in Joan. xxvii, n. 5.

maining disciples, and asked them if they too were about to depart. He was nobly answered by the faithful Peter, who well deserved, on account of his many generous professions of strong belief in his Master, to be the head of the apostolic band and the rock of Christ's Church: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God."*

As St. Augustine says in the same beautiful treatise on the Gospel of St. John which I have already quoted: "Peter answered in behalf of all—one for many, unity for the collective whole: 'Then Simon Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go?' Thou drivest us from Thee; give us thy other self. 'To whom shall we go?' 'Thou hast the words of eternal life.' See how Peter, by the gift of God and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, understood Him. How other than because he believed? 'Thou hast the words of eternal life.' For Thou hast eternal life in the ministration of thy Body and Blood. 'And we have believed and have known'—not have known and believed, but '*believed and*

* John, vi. 69, 70.

known.' For we believed in order to know; for if we wanted to know first and then to believe we should not be able either to know or to believe. What have we believed and known? 'That Thou art Christ, the Son of God'—that is, that Thou art that very eternal life, and that Thou givest in thy Flesh and Blood only that which Thou art."

How faithfully Jesus fulfilled his promise we see by the history of the last night He spent upon earth before his Passion. What a beautifully touching scene—one for ever sacredly memorable—that last meeting in the supper-room at Jerusalem! St. Luke the evangelist recounts for us the circumstances preceding the great feast. Our Saviour "sent Peter and John, saying: Go and prepare for us the Pasch, that we may eat. But they said: Where wilt Thou that we prepare? And He said to them: Behold, as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And you shall say to the good man of the house: The Master saith to thee: Where is the guest-chamber, where I may eat the Pasch with my disciples? And he will show you a large din-

ing-room furnished, and there prepare. And they going found as He had said to them, and made ready the Pasch. And when the hour was come He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. And He said to them: With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer."*

All things were therefore in readiness, and they ate the Paschal Lamb together for the last time (for the institution of the Eucharist, according to St. Luke and St. Paul, did not take place until after the supper). The Paschal Lamb was a type of Christ, his suffering and expiation. This last Passover was the finishing of the Jewish law and ceremonial, the beginning of a new dispensation, the establishment of a holier Sacrifice, and the institution of a far more excellent and fruitful feast, constituting in itself a compendium of all the wonderful works of God.

What a succession of most touching scenes, most striking contrasts, most enduring and salutary lessons consumed the hours of that most interesting of all nights ever recorded in history! Behold the Saviour of men surrounded

* Luke, xxii. 8-15.

by his little band of lowly followers—that band destined, notwithstanding, to change the face of the world. What loving condescension, what charming affability and inexpressible tenderness were manifested by the God-Man to his humble associates in the grandest of all works ever undertaken by the Godhead.

His human heart seemed to melt within his breast on the occasion of this the last supper they were ever to take together upon earth. The outpouring of his anxious love He thus expressed in accents most tender and affecting: "With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you:"

They were there in loving intimacy; yet a dark cloud hovered over the festive scene, for the Master had already warned them that one amongst them was about to betray Him and deliver Him up to death—the cruel, ignominious death of the cross. How the hearts of the faithful apostles must have been overwhelmed with grief and sadness unutterable! That beloved Master, whom they loved with such deep affection; who bore with such meekness their rudeness, impatience, slowness, understanding; who, that very evening, gave

them such a wonderful example of humility in kneeling down and washing their weary, travel-stained feet—that they were about to lose Him, and through the treachery of one of their own number, was enough to break their already heavy hearts.

Dreading their own weakness, and in alarm lest it might betray them into some sudden infidelity, each one cried out in anguish, "Lord, is it I?" For these his faithful ones He prepared a great and lasting consolation. The Father was to part with his children, the Master with his disciples, but not without making his last will and testament, not without leaving behind Him a legacy which would support them during the remainder of their sad pilgrimage in this world, and be at the same time a pledge of eternal life and happiness.

He was then to fulfil the promise He made the year before, and on this memorable night institute the Adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist, wherein He would give them his Flesh to eat and his Blood to drink, in order to refresh their souls, strengthen them for the time of temptation and affliction consequent upon his Passion and Death, and give them an earnest

of that more abundant life in store for all who would for ever afterwards partake with humility, piety, and devotion of this most holy Sacrament.

"And whilst they were at supper Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat; this is my Body. And taking the chalice He gave thanks; and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins."* These words are plain and clear, without a shadow of doubt or ambiguity. As they stand in the translation, so they are in the original: "This *is* my Body" —not this *signifies* my Body, or is the *figure* of my Body, or *represents* my Body, but absolutely "This is my Body." Some unlearned, if not really malicious, commentators have declared, as did Dr. Adam Clarke, that our Saviour had to make use of the equivalent for the word "is" in the Syro-Chaldaic tongue (that being the language in which He spoke), as there was no expression in it to correspond with our word "signify" or "represent." Now, according to

* Matt. xxvi. 26-29.

the late Cardinal Wiseman, an eminent philologist as well as theologian, there are in that language forty-five words, any of which our Lord could have used if He merely wished to express the term "represent." As a remarkable proof of this Dr. Wiseman quotes the testimony of St. Maruthas, Bishop of Tangrit, at the close of the fourth century, who, writing in that same Syriac language, thus expresses himself: "If Christ had not instituted the Blessed Sacrament, the faithful of after times would have been deprived of the communion of his Body and Blood. But now, so often as we approach the Body and Blood, and receive them upon our hands, we believe that we embrace his Body and are made of his Flesh and of his Bones, as it is written. For Christ did not call it a type or a symbol, but said: 'Truly, this *is* my Body and this *is* my Blood.'"

The same Almighty Power that in the beginning said, "Let light be made, and light was made," that changed water into wine at the marriage feast, that recalled the dead to life, that had absolute command over all the forces of nature—that same power, in pronouncing over the bread these words, "This is my Body,"

and over the wine, "This is my Blood," immediately changed them into his Flesh and Blood.

That the apostles accepted this doctrine in the same sense that we do, and that the Catholic Church has always held the same from the beginning is evident from the testimony of St. Paul, who declared that he received it immediately from the Lord Himself: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye and eat: this is my Body which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the New Testament in my Blood; this do ye, as often as you shall drink for the commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come. Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the

chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord." Nothing could be clearer or stronger than this apostolic testimony; for how could any man be condemned for not "discerning the Body of the Lord," or be "guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord," if his Body and Blood were not actually present in the Sacrament of the Altar? No other meaning can possibly be given to the words of Christ and to the testimony of St. Paul, unless you do violence to human language as well as to the belief of eighteen centuries.

We read in the acts of the martyrdom of St Andrew the apostle that he declared it was his custom to offer the sacrifice of the Immaculate Lamb every day on the altar: "*Immaculatum Agnum quotidie in altari crucis immolo.*" St. Irenæus, in the age following that of the apostles, gives his testimony on this important doctrine: "Christ taught his disciples the new oblation of his Body and Blood, lest they might become unfruitful and ungrateful; which the Church, receiving from the apostles, offers to God throughout the whole world."

"This saying is hard" undoubtedly to those who have not the precious gift of faith. Hence it is that, in the primitive ages of the Church, this doctrine was kept a secret from those not of the household of faith, even from catechumens preparing to enter the Church. This custom was called *disciplina arcani*—the discipline of the secret. In consequence of this, many ridiculous stories were spread abroad in those times to the injury of Christians, accusing them of feasting on the flesh and blood of new-born babes in their secret assemblies—a terrible misconstruction of the doctrine of the Eucharistic Banquet. St. Augustine thus refers to the existence of this regulation even in his time: "If we say to a catechumen, 'Dost thou believe in Christ?' he will answer, 'I do believe,' and will sign himself (with the sign of the cross); he already carries on his forehead the cross of Christ, and is not ashamed of the cross of his Lord. Behold! he has already believed in his name. Let us ask him, 'Dost thou eat of the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink of his Blood?' he knows not what we say, because Jesus has not yet trusted Himself to him."*

* Tract. xi. in Joan., n. 3.

"This saying is hard," but it becomes easy of belief if we reflect who it is that says it, and consider the divine authority on which it rests: "Heaven and earth shall pass away before my words shall fail." God does not require of us to understand *how* He works this greatest of miracles, but to believe his word, to bow down and adore. Everything that appeals to our senses remains—the appearance, the taste, the colour, the form—but we must believe, on the strength of his divine word, the word of Him who can neither deceive nor be deceived, that the substance of bread and the substance of wine are changed, at the moment of consecration, into the substance of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. To make any valid objection against this doctrine we should first know what is substance, what is matter; and who can tell?

"People say," writes Cardinal Newman in his *Apologia*, "that the doctrine of transubstantiation is difficult to believe. I did not believe the doctrine till I was a Catholic. I had no difficulty in believing it as soon as I believed that the Catholic Roman Church was the oracle of God, and that she had declared this doctrine to be part of the original revelation. It is diffi-

cult, impossible, to imagine, I grant; but how is it difficult to believe? Yet Macaulay thought it is so difficult to believe that he had need of a believer in it, of talents as eminent as Sir Thomas More, before he could bring himself to conceive that the Catholics of an enlightened age could resist the overwhelming force of the argument against it. 'Sir Thomas More,' he says, 'is one of the choice specimens of wisdom and virtue; and the doctrine of transubstantiation is a kind of proof-charge. A faith which stands that test will stand any test.' But, for myself, I cannot indeed prove it, I cannot tell *how* it is; but I say, 'Why should it not be? What's to hinder it? What do I know of substance or matter? Just as much as the greatest philosophers, and that is nothing at all.'"

Moreover, it would be necessary to know all the wonderful qualities of glorified bodies, especially of the glorified Body of the Redeemer—qualities of which we have but very imperfect notions. We can form a faint idea of them from some of the facts attending the Resurrection of Christ. We know from Sacred Writ that when the apostles were gathered together in a large room in Jerusalem, the doors being closed and

locked for fear of the Jews, the glorified Body of our Lord pierced the walls and stood before them; and St. Thomas, in order to be sure that it was not merely an apparition but the risen Body of his Master, examined our Lord's Sacred Wounds and was at once convinced: "After eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you. Then He saith to Thomas, Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered, and said to Him: My Lord, and my God. Jesus saith to him: Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."*

It is really astonishing what an amount of ignorance exists with regard to the true teaching of the Catholic Church on the dogma of the Real Presence, even among highly cultured and otherwise well-educated non-Catholics. The late Dean Stanley, in his "Christian Institution," made this absurd statement: "The popular notion of the Roman Catholic doctrine, is,

* John, xx. 26-30.

no doubt, that the change believed to be effected in the Eucharist is not of 'the substance' but of the 'accidents,'"* and on the authority of Bishop Thirlwall, he misquoted *St. Thomas* as being in favour of this view—St. Thomas, the great doctor of the Eucharist. The slightest reference even to the simplest of Catholic catechisms placed in the hands of our "little ones" would at once remove this gross misconception: "By the words of consecration spoken by the Priest at Mass the *substance* of the bread and wine is changed into the *substance* of the Body and Blood of Christ."

The Real Presence, then, is a difficult doctrine, only to those who have not the faith, but it should not be a stumbling-block to those who believe that Christ is God, and that therefore He can effect all that He says and fulfil all that He promises, that their "faith might not stand on the wisdom of men but on the power of God."†

The power of God would, indeed, be very limited if it could do naught beyond the measure of our feeble conceptions. Our senses,

* Harper's Edition, p. 82. † 1 Cor. ii. 5.

it is true, tell us that there are present only the appearances of bread and wine, their figure, colour, taste; but there is one of our senses that comes to our aid in this difficulty, and that is the sense of hearing—*fides ex auditu* faith cometh by hearing, and by hearing and believing the words of Jesus Christ we know that only the appearances of bread and wine remain, while their substance is changed into the substance of the Body and Blood of the Lord by the all-powerful action of God at the moment of consecration; and as that Body is a living Body, glorious, immortal, and impassible, Jesus, as true man as well as true God, is present with his humanity as well as his divinity in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

It is in the power of God to suspend the action of the laws of nature and to deprive bodies of their natural properties. It is natural, for instance, for fire to burn, yet He suspended the natural action of fire in the case of the three young Israelites who were cast into the fiery furnace, and who came out from it perfectly safe and sound. He "made the midst of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing

dew, and the fire touched them not at all, nor troubled them, nor did them any harm."*

It is natural for the sun to give forth its light; yet, on the death of our Saviour, it no longer illumined the earth; and it is a well-known fact that this was not due to an eclipse by the moon.

The Real Presence is scarcely less wonderful than many other miracles of our Saviour—his commanding the winds and the sea, walking upon the water, changing water into wine, feeding immense multitudes with a few loaves, or bringing back to life, health, and strength the body of Lazarus, that had been for some days mouldering in the tomb.

We believe that the Body of Christ is as truly present in the Eucharist as it was on the cross, but not in the same manner. On the cross, his Body was present in a "natural, ordinary, visible, palpable manner," while in the Eucharist his Body is present just as truly, but by a supernatural and sacramental presence. We adore not the appearances of bread and wine, but what we believe to be really there—

* Dan. iii. 50.

the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Relying on his divine word, which can never fail, we do not disquiet our minds by inquiring into what is above the reach of our limited understanding, namely, as to how or by what manner of means He accomplishes this mystery and works this wondrous miracle, but we bow down, and adore, and render thanks for his unspeakable mercy and incomprehensible beneficence, saying: "I believe, O Lord! help Thou my unbelief;" or with faithful Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Jesus, being divine, can certainly be in many places at one and the same time, and multiply the presence of his adorable glorified body for the refreshment of the souls of men. He abides in the Eucharist, not merely while it is in actual use, but in a permanent state as long as the sacred species remain uncorrupt. He is whole and entire under each particle, with his Flesh and Blood, his Soul and Divinity, and is therein to be adored with divine worship. As St. Thomas Aquinas says: "However small the species of bread may be, there is the whole Body

of Christ by conversion, his Blood by connection, his Soul by conjunction, and his whole Godhead by union." Christ veils Himself under the sacred species in order to try our faith and afterwards reward it. "Blessed are they who have not seen, yet have believed;" or, as St. Augustine says: "Faith is to believe what you do not see, or to trust words about a hidden thing which truly exists, though you cannot see it with your eyes. About the things that we see we have knowledge, and not faith."

The Blessed Eucharist has all the essentials for a true sacrifice as well as for a true sacrament; and our Saviour commanded his apostles, and through them their successors, to continue the Sacrifice and to administer the Sacrament as long as time would last: "This do in commemoration of me."

This is the clean oblation of which Malachy spoke in prophecy, and which is to be continued during all time, "from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof." This is the great Sacrifice which was prefigured by many noble types in the Old Dispensation—the offering of bread and wine by Melchisedech, the Paschal Lamb, the sprinkling of blood, and by the manna, the

food sent down from heaven for the sustenance of the people of God during their sojourn in the desert. "Now all these things happened to them in figure,"* but we are blessed with the reality. Were we to deny the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist we should be forced to admit that the figures and sacrifices of the Old Law were by no means inferior to the oblation of the New Dispensation; for, if the Eucharist be only a sign or simple commemoration, then the consuming of the Paschal Lamb, with its attendant ceremonies, was a far more impressive rite than that established by Christ Himself. If you take away the Real Presence, our worship becomes poor indeed, and you would place us on no higher level than that of "the weak and needy elements"† of the Old Dispensation.

In his inconceivable goodness, Jesus left us not thus poor and needy. Through his inspired prophet He tells us in soul-stirring accents: "My delights were to be with the children of men;"† and this delight He consummates in the Sacrament of the altar, wherein He abides for

* 1 Cor. x. 11. † Gal. iv. 9.
‡ Prov. viii. 31.

our continual encouragement, our support, our nourishment, and strength.

The beloved disciple, speaking of his Master, tells us that, "having loved his own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end."* Truly He loved "his own;" and all men are "his own," because it was for their sake He left his eternal resting-place, the bosom of his Heavenly Father, and, descending to earth, condescended to clothe Himself with our frail humanity, to lead an humble, retired, obscure, laborious life, to endure every insult, to suffer every torment, and even to undergo the most cruel and shameful of deaths. This was "loving his own, and loving them unto the end." But only Jesus could conceive it possible to do more, and He did it; for his love triumphed over death itself in instituting the Eucharist, whereby we are never separated from Him, but are really fed on his sacred flesh and blood, to the perpetual nourishment of our immortal souls. Truly "He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord; He hath given food to them that fear Him;"†

* St. John, xiii. 1. † Ps. cx. 4-5.

and of all his wonderful works the Eucharist is the great compendium. For no other work of the Almighty demonstrates so clearly and magnificently the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God: His wisdom, for, although it is infinite, it could not devise anything greater, more excellent, or more efficacious than this Sacrament of his love; his power, for, although it is boundless, it could not call into being anything that could surpass or even equal what we possess in the Eucharist; his goodness, for, although it is immeasurable, it would be absolutely impossible, even for the "Giver of every good and perfect gift," to bestow on man anything richer or more precious: for could He possibly give us anything better than Himself, the source of all grace, holiness, perfection, and happiness?

There are many generous-hearted Christians, who would give all that they possess in this world of earthly treasures to gaze but once on the beauteous face of Jesus, to bask in the sunshine of his smile, or to listen, be the time never so short, to the words of more than human wisdom that fell from his sacred lips. There are others who are willing to make great

sacrifices, to run no small risks, and undertake a very long, tedious, and dangerous journey, in order to visit the Holy Land, where the Son of Man dwelt, laboured, suffered, and died; but the very poorest among us, without ever leaving the neighbourhood of their humble home, can find a greater treasure near their own doors. No matter how plain or how small our parish church may be, we may always, at any moment of the day or night, find Jesus Himself in the Tabernacle of his love, ever ready to welcome us, and to accord us a most gracious reception; to listen to our petitions, to console us in our sorrows, to strengthen us in our temptations, to pour oil into our wounds, to heal our infirmities, and send us back to struggle with the world with lighter hearts and brighter hopes.

There, at the foot of the altar, the martyr is imbued with heroic courage, and the humble confessor gains strength to undergo the many sacrifices that his sacred vocation demands. The Real Presence is the life, and soul, and strength of the Church of God. There all worship centres; there all love and devotion begin and end.

T. W. Allies, M.A., a distinguished English writer, some years before he embraced the Catholic faith, and while he was yet a minister of the Established Church of England, thus spoke of the Real Presence and the manner in which this doctrine impressed him:—

"I am greatly struck with the power execised in the Roman Church by the great dogma of the Real Presence. It is the centre and life of the whole. It is the secret support of the priest's painful, self-denying mission; by it mainly the religious orders maintain themselves; the warmest, deepest, lowliest, most triumphant and enraptured feelings surround it. The nun that adores in silence for hours together, one from the other taking up that solitary, awful watch in the immediate presence of the King of kings; the crowd of worshippers that kneel at the blessed yet fearful moment when earth and heaven are united by the coming down of the mystical Bridegroom into the tabernacle of his Church; the pious soul that, not once or twice but many times during the day, humbles itself before Him; the congregations which close the day by their direct homage to Him, as present to the threefold nature of man, body,

soul, and spirit: all these attest the deep practical import which the dogma of the Real Presence exerts on the Catholic mind. Are not their churches holier to the believing soul than was the Temple of Jerusalem when the visible glory of the Lord descended on it? For does not the single lamp burning before the shrine indicate a Presence inexpressibly more condescending, gracious, and exalting to man? In Catholic countries the offering of direct adoration, the contemplation of the mind absorbed in the abyss of the Incarnation, never ceases one instant of the day or night." ("A Life's Decision," p. 240.)

The Real Presence, then, is the soul of the Catholic religion—the grand luminous centre of all its worship and ceremonies. It is on account of it that we build such magnificent temples; that the rich give of their abundance and the poor out of their very poverty towards the adornment of God's altar; that we consider no ornaments too precious or costly, no vestments too grand or beautiful to do honour to our Divine Guest.

It is for his sake, and out of homage to the sacrifice of his Body and Blood, that the priests

of the Church separate themselves from the world and renounce home joys and pleasures in order to devote themselves purely and entirely to his sole service as worthy ministers at his altar.

The objects Christ had in view in instituting the Blessed Eucharist were to apply his infinite merits to individual souls, to nourish and augment the life of grace in the hearts of the faithful, to render them more and more conformable to his own image, and to effect in them a more intimate union with Himself.

This sacrament effectually repairs the great damage done to our nature by original sin. Ever since this transgression of our first parents "man is prone to evil from his youth." His intellect has been obscured and his will weakened in its operations. His mind has become enfeebled in its search after truth, and his heart in its search after true goodness.

Our passions are fierce and oftentimes violent and the enemies of our souls are very crafty and powerful. "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this

darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."*

Knowing therefore our weakness, Jesus, in his boundless mercy and goodness, has come to our rescue, and has provided us with a constant source of strength in this most holy of sacraments, which He established for the building up, sustaining, and nourishing of our souls. "Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you."†

He thereby incorporates Himself with us, the Creator becomes most closely united with his creatures, in order that we may live his life, be animated with his spirit, and walk more straightly in his sacred footsteps. He becomes one with us here, that we may be one with Him hereafter. He becomes our guest, our consoler our dearest friend. "I call you no longer servants, but friends."‡ "I will not leave you orphans,"§ says this tenderest of Fathers to us; for He remains among us as a prisoner of love on our altars, where we may always seek Him and be sure to find Him; where we may go

* Ephes. vi. 12.
† Prov. ix. 5.
‡ John, xv. 15.
§ Ibid. xiv. 18.

and lay all our burdens at his feet; where we may obtain strength in the day of trial, comfort in the time of affliction, until the last hour shall arrive, when He Himself will come to visit us in the Holy Viaticum and conduct us safely to our eternal home. "All you that thirst, come to the waters; and you that have no money, make haste, buy, and eat: come ye; buy wine and milk without money, and without any price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which doth not satisfy you? Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and your soul shall be delighted in fatness. Incline your ear and come to me: hear and your soul shall live."*

* Isai. lv. 1-3.

Love's Sacrifice.

WE come now to the last act in the wondrous drama of the God-Man's life upon earth. The most astonishing spectacle the world ever witnessed is now to be presented to our contemplation—a spectacle exhibiting apparently the most opposite views and seeming contradictions: a spectacle at the same time glorious and ignominious, saddening and consoling, mournful beyond the power of human conception, yet productive of joy most intense, satisfaction most lasting, and happiness most abundant.

All this is perfectly realised in the crucifixion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as we shall see on considering his Passion, and more especially his death with all its momentous

consequences. As St. Paul declares, "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*

"He humbled Himself." To fully understand how much He humbled Himself we should first know who He was and what He became. He was none other than the Eternal Son of God the Father, the Second Person of the ever-adorable Trinity, the equal of that same Father—the everlasting, life-giving Principle—and of the Holy Spirit, the Source of all light, all grace, all love. In Him are all power, perfection holiness. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He knows the past and the future, as He knows the present and He "enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." He it was that called this grand and beautiful universe into being by the mere expression of his divine will, peopled the earth with innumerable creatures, and studded the heavens with countless stars and planets, giving to each its proper place and peculiar splendour. He who is Almighty hath done these things, and He it is who condescended to

* Phil. ii. 8.

humble Himself by becoming man, like one of his own creatures, whom He formed of the slime of the earth, "taking upon Himself the form of a servant," and being in all things like unto us, "excepting sin."

As we have already seen in the first part of this work, this was an astounding humiliation on the part of a Divine Being; but, as the apostle says, He went still further and "humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death." Was it not amply sufficient that He should annihilate Himself, as it were, by becoming man, to be thus shorn of his glory, splendour, and magnificence so properly his own, without descending still lower into the deep, utter abasement of death? Inconceivable as it is his goodness urged Him to it, and of his own free will and choice He determined to undergo that fearful penalty, to submit to that terrible separation of body and soul so dreaded by all mankind. There was no necessity incumbent on Him for so doing—no other necessity but that imposed upon Him by his own goodness, mercy, and divine charity: "Therefore doth the Father love Me; because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me: but I lay it

down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again."*

What created intelligence can fathom the depth of such humility? Is it possible for even a divine being to undergo greater humiliation for the sake of his poor, miserable creatures?

Well may we exclaim with St. Paul: "O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?"† Let all creatures be silent, and, since it is impossible for them fully to understand, let them bow down and adore his incomprehensible judgments and admire his inscrutable ways; for He humbled Himself not only to death, but "even unto the death of the cross"—the ignominious cross.

What a terrible death, and what fearful shame, mortification, and suffering preceded it! Who can conceive his agony in the Garden of Gethsemani? His human nature seemed to rise in rebellion at the thought of the intense

* John, x. 17, 18. † Rom. xi. 33-35.

torments He had to undergo, and from the knowledge which He had of the almost insupportable burden that was to be laid upon his shoulders, "for God had laid upon Him the iniquities of us all."

Being divine, He saw at a glance the number and enormity of all the sins that ever were, or unfortunately ever should be committed in the world unto the end of time; and all this burden of crime He had to expiate, and thus satisfy the outraged majesty of the Godhead. This, infinitely more than the merely physical sufferings which He knew were in store for Him, oppressed Him with its terrible weight and prostrated Him to the earth. What increased intensely his mighty sorrow was the sad knowledge He possessed that, notwithstanding all his sufferings, his blood would be shed in vain for a large number of the children of men.

No wonder, then, that his human nature shrank from the terrible ordeal, and that He cried out in all the agony of his soul to his Heavenly Father: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away," adding, however, with divine generosity, "Nevertheless, not as I

will, but as Thou wilt."* So great was his anguish, so fearful the torture of mind, that it forced the very blood to ooze from his sacred veins and bedew the ground on that night of agony: "And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."† "My soul is sorrowful unto death," He exclaimed: for, were He not sustained by a power more than human, He must have succumbed under the weight of his overwhelming sorrow. "The Passion," said the late Father Faber, "is a science wherein we learn by prayer, and in whose deep places our hearts see farther than our eyes."

Who could possibly follow the Saviour through the other most appalling scenes of his bitter Passion without feeling the deepest commiseration, the most undisguised sorrow, and most choking sensations of the heart when overwhelmed with grief and sadness? He who was the most loving of masters was betrayed and sold by one whom He had received into his most intimate friendship and companionship, and on whom He had lavished his choicest gifts.

* Matt. xxvi. 39. † Luke, xxii, 44.

This brought the bitterest of all pains to the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord: "For if mine enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. And if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him. But thou a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweetmeats together with me."*

"Those who were highest in dignity," says Louis of Granada, "became deepest in wickedness, as the best wine becomes the strongest vinegar." The Lord was sold by Judas, denied by Peter, and abandoned by the other apostles: "In thy sight are all they that afflict Me: My heart hath expected reproach and misery. And I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none. And they gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."†

He was led away as a common malefactor, like a thief or a murderer, dragged from tribunal to tribunal by a most cruel, hardened,

* Ps. liv. 13-14. † Ibid. xviii. 21-23.

beastly, cowardly soldiery, mocked and slandered, despised and reviled, scoffed at and beaten, and condemned as the greatest of criminals. The face of Him who was, as the Psalmist says, "the most beautiful of the children of men"—that face which beamed with mercy and goodness—was made the object of the jeers and derision of the unfeeling rabble, and the target even for their vile spittle. He was tied to a pillar, stripped of his clothes, and his pure, virginal flesh mercilessly torn by the cruel lash—a punishment so ignominious that it was never inflicted on a Roman citizen, no matter how great his crime. Then his sacred brow was pierced and his head encircled with a crown of sharpest thorns.

In this pitiable state, his face disfigured with blood and wounds, and his body bending under the oppressive weight of the rough, heavy cross, He wended his weary, sorrowful way up Calvary's Mount. To that ignominious cross were nailed those feet, those sacred feet that were never employed but on errands of love and mercy, "going about doing good." To it also were nailed those hands that were never raised but to bless mankind, that were perpe-

tually bestowing favours, that gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, and brought the dead to life. That sacred side, in which was incased that Divine Heart perpetually burning with most ardent love for all men, was cruelly pierced with a lance.

To add to his bitter grief He sees standing in speechless agony at the foot of the cross that most loving of Mothers, whom not all the world could console—that Virgin Mother who would willingly have died a hundred deaths for the privilege which she enjoyed of yore of taking that precious head to her bosom and washing away with her tears its many stains of blood and disfigurement.

As He hung on that dreadful cross, the whole weight of his body resting on the huge nails, which only widened and deepened the gaping wounds, before even attempting to console his most holy Mother, his first words were a prayer to his Heavenly Father on behalf of his cruel persecutors: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* No wonder the infidel Rousseau was obliged to confess

* Luke, xxiii. 34.

that, if Socrates died like a philosopher, Christ died like a God.

Hanging for hours in agony on the cross, his exhausted nature succumbs at last: He gives forth his last sigh, He gasps, He dies. All is consummated. The angels linger in sorrow over that dreadful scene, the heavens tremble, the sun refuses to give its light, the earth opens, the rocks are split asunder, the veil of the Temple is rent in twain, the devils are stricken with terror, and hell itself is shaken to its foundations.

The dreadful scene is over, heaven is pacified, God's anger is appeased, Satan conquered, man's ransom paid, and superabundantly paid,

The thought that strikes us, at this particular stage of our meditation, with peculiar force is the wonderful fulfilment, in the Person of Jesus Christ, of all the ancient types, figures, and prophecies relative to the Messias, more especially those that concern his Sacred Passion and Death. Our Jewish brethren still hold possession of the sacred records of the Old Dispensation, the authenticity of which we recognise, and whose inspiration and divine authority we venerate as truly as they do; but

what seems a deep, inexplicable mystery to us is the fact that, notwithstanding how clearly their ancient types and figures point to Jesus, and how unmistakably their prophecies are fulfilled in the life, and more especially in the sufferings, of our Lord, they still, as of yore, refuse to acknowledge Him as truly their Messias.

Innocent Abel was the first type, but a far more striking one was young Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice up the mountain, and whom his own father was ready to offer up as a victim to the Most High.

The Almighty, wishing to try the faith of Abraham, "said to him: Abraham, Abraham. And he answered: Here I am. He said to him: Take thy only-begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision; and there thou shalt offer him for a holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show thee. . . . And he took wood for the holocaust, and laid it upon Isaac his son, and he himself carried in his hands fire and a sword. And as they two went on together, Isaac said to his father: My father. And he answered: What wilt thou, son? Behold, saith he, fire and wood: where is the

victim for the holocaust? And Abraham said: God will provide Himself a victim for a holocaust, my son. So they went on together. And they came to the place which God had shown him, where he built an altar, and laid the wood in order upon it: and when he had bound Isaac his son, he laid him on the altar upon the pile of wood. And he put forth his hand and took the sword to sacrifice his son. And behold an angel of the Lord from heaven called to him, saying: Abraham, Abraham. And he answered: Here I am. And he said to him: Lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou anything to him; now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for my sake."*

No type or figure could be plainer, but with this exception; that, although the Almighty was satisfied with simply the intention of Abraham and the manifestation of his remarkable faith, yet He Himself would not spare his own Divine Son in the same manner, but allowed Him to drain the chalice of suffering to

* Gen. xxii. 1-12.

the bitter end, for "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son."*

The chaste Joseph, his father's favourite son, sold by his own brothers for twenty pieces of silver—those brethren whom he was afterwards to save from famine and misery—was another unmistakable type of the Saviour of men delivered over to his enemies by one of his own chosen apostles for the miserable, paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver.

Passing over the other types and figures to come to the prophecies, if we read the fifty-third chapter of Isaias, written about eight hundred years before the death of our Saviour, we would be naturally inclined to think that instead of one of the ancient prophecies, we were reading the words of one of the Evangelists, or the testimony of an actual eye-witness of the terrible scenes of the Passion, so fearfully realistic is the picture which the inspired writer places before us of the "Man of Sorrows."

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? And He shall grow up as a tender plant before Him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground: there is

* John, iii. 16.

no beauty in Him, nor comeliness: and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him: despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, everyone hath turned aside into his own way: and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was offered because it was his own will, and He opened not his mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open his mouth. He was taken away from distress and from judgment: who shall declare his generation? Because He is cut off out of the land of the living: for the wickedness of my people have I struck Him. And He shall give the ungodly for his burial, and the rich for his

death: because He hath done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in his mouth. And the Lord was pleased to bruise Him in infirmity: if He shall lay down his life for sin, He shall see a long-lived seed, and the will of the Lord shall be prosperous in his hand. Because his soul hath laboured, He shall see and be filled: by his knowledge shall this my just servant justify many, and He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I distribute to Him very many, and He shall divide the spoils of the strong, because He hath delivered his soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked: and He hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors."

His wounds and his sorrows, his bruises and disfigurement; the insults that were heaped upon Him; the ignominy to which He was subjected, being "reputed with the wicked," considered as a "leper," as "one struck by God and afflicted;" his silence and meekness in the midst of his persecutors and tormentors, "led as a sheep to the slaughter, and dumb as a lamb before his shearer," bearing the sins of many and praying for the transgressors—surely no description of the actual facts as they happened

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could possibly have been more vivid or more faithful.

If we turn to the inspired writings of the Royal Psalmist we shall find him describing other stages of the Saviour's Passion: "O God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? . . . I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips, and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver Him; let Him save Him, seeing that He delighteth in Him;"* the first verse the identical words used by our Lord when hanging in agony on the cross, and the other two verses exactly corresponding with the action and language of his enemies at the time of the crucifixion, according to St Matthew (xxvii. 39-44): "And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads, and saying: Vah, Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self: if Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief-priests

* Ps. xxi. 1, 7-9.

with the scribes and ancients mocking, said: He saved others: Himself He cannot save: if He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God: let Him now deliver Him if He will have Him; for He said: I am the Son of God."

Thus holy David, in the same Psalm, continues to describe the sufferings of his glorious Descendant: "They have opened their mouths against me, as a lion ravening and roaring. I am poured out like water; and all my bones are scattered. My heart is become like wax melting in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws: and Thou hast brought me down into the dust of death. For many dogs have encompassed me: the council of the malignant hath besieged me. They have dug my hands and feet. They have numbered all my bones. And they have looked and stared upon me. They parted my garments amongst them; and upon my vesture they cast lots." The counterpart of this is to be found in St. Matthew (xxvii. 35): "And after they had crucified Him, they divided his garments, casting lots."

The reason the writer has for dwelling at some length on this perfect realisation of the ancient figures and fulfilment of the prophecies is the desire which all Christians ought to have for the conversion of that noble and grand old Jewish race, from whom have sprung those whom we venerate most in the world—Jesus and Mary. This great people were for long ages the sole depositaries of God's truth, and we should pray that they may acknowledge their Messias, Lord, and Redeemer, and be once more received into divine favour. So the consideration of the wonderful life-history of Christ ought to be of deepest interest not only to Christians but also to Jews, and, in fact, to every member of the human race.

In meditating on these terrible sufferings of the "Man of Sorrows," the question naturally arises in our minds, "Why should the God-Man undergo all this excess of pain and torment?" The only answer is: "Because of the excess of love." We know full well that all this suffering was not absolutely necessary; for, Infinite Being as He is, one single drop of his Blood, yea, one tear, one sigh, even one word of the Incarnate God, would be sufficient to

redeem countless worlds. But what was sufficient of itself could not satisfy his love for all mankind, and therefore He drained the bitter chalice to the very dregs. This He did in order to show us more clearly and forcibly how infinitely pure and holy is God, how heinous is sin in itself and what a terrible insult it offers to his Majesty, how precious beyond all comparison is the soul of even the poorest and humblest of mortals, and how highly conducive to our eternal interests is the state of trial, suffering, and affliction.

These are grave and salutary lessons: in fact, there are none graver or more salutary, since an Incarnate God was willing to undergo such pains of mind and body, desolation of soul, and even a shameful death, to impress them deeply on our individual hearts.

Christ carried his cross, and with it the burden of the many sins of each one of us in particular, for each one of us was as entirely present to his mind as if no one else existed. In carrying that cross He by no means freed us from the obligation of carrying our own, for He solemnly declared: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his

cross and follow Me."* It is doubtless true that He underwent expiation for all men, and that, unless He suffered for us, all our sufferings would be in vain; yet it is equally certain that we cannot otherwise show our appreciation of all that He has done for us without sharing in his grief and participating in his sorrow.

This can only be accomplished by each one carrying his own cross and walking in the footsteps of the Master. This alone can give us a real title to the name of a disciple, to the name of Christian, which means a follower of Christ. Crosses vary according to the individuals. One finds his in one shape, another in a different form; with some it is comparatively light, with others far heavier.

In the time of the Old Dispensation the Almighty treated the Jewish people as we would little children: He promised them earthly rewards for their fidelity. But in the New Law, to those who grow strong in Christ, although not absolutely denying earthly favours, He holds out to them an eternal rather than a temporal recompense. As Lord Bacon wisely remarked: "Prosperity is the blessing of the

* Matt. xvi. 24.

Old Testament, adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction and the clearer revelation of God's favours. Yet even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many funereal airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon."

Afflictions are very frequently but blessings in disguise, or, as the Catholic poet, Aubrey de Vere, beautifully expresses it:—

"Count each affliction, whether light or grave,
God's messenger sent down to thee; do thou
With courtesy receive him; rise and bow;
And, ere his shadow pass thy threshold, crave
Permission first his heavenly feet to lave;
Then lay before him all thou hast. Allow
No cloud of passion to usurp thy brow
Or mar thy hospitality; no wave
Of mortal tumult to obliterate
The soul's marmoreal calmness. Grief should be,
Like joy, majestic, equable, sedate;
Confirming, cleansing, raising, making free;
Strong to consume small troubles; to commend
Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end."

Suffering is the great purifier. Some under-

go it as a punishment for past offences, and to them it is sent in mercy to preserve them from eternal misery. "His flesh is consumed with punishments, let him return to the days of his youth. He shall pray to God, and He will be gracious to him: and he shall see his face with joy, and He will render to man his justice. He shall look upon men, and shall say: I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I deserved. He hath delivered his soul from going into destruction, that it may live and see the light."*

To others, living in sin and entirely forgetful of God and their own eternal interests, God permits some calamity to befall them, in order to warn them of their danger and to recall them to his service. "We have sinned with our fathers, we have done unjustly, we have committed iniquity: have Thou mercy on us, because Thou art good, or punish our iniquities by chastising us thyself."†

There is another and higher class of persons to whom God sends trial and pain and desolation of spirit, and these are his chosen ones,

* Job, xxxiii. 25-29. † Judith, vii. 19, 20.

his beloved servants, whom He wishes to purify from some slight imperfections or to raise to the loftier degrees of heroic virtue, examples of which we see in the saints of the Old as well as of the New Law. "Our father Abraham was tempted, and being proved by many tribulations, was made the friend of God. So Isaac, so Jacob, so Moses, and all that have pleased God, passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful."* "Because thou wast acceptable to God," said the Archangel Raphael to Tobias, "it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." He was well tried and not found wanting. Sara, the wife of the younger Tobias, gives forth this glorious testimony to her Maker: "Of this everyone is sure that worshippeth Thee, that his life, if it be under trial, shall be crowned: and if it be under tribulation, it shall be delivered: and if it be under correction, it shall be allowed to come to thy mercy. For Thou art not delighted in our being lost: because after a storm Thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping Thou pourest in joyfulness."†

* Judith, viii. 22, 23 Tobias, iii. 21, 22.

The book that stands next to the Bible for its pure, sound, heavenly doctrine is, in the estimation of the majority of Christians, the "Imitation of Christ," a work generally ascribed to the holy monk, Thomas à Kempis. In that most beautiful of chapters, the twelfth of the second book, on "The Royal Road of the Cross," the author speaks like one inspired :—

"Why, then, art thou afraid to take up thy cross, which leadeth to the kingdom? In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection from enemies; in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit; in the cross is height of virtue; in the cross is perfection of sanctity. There is no health of soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross. Take up, therefore, thy cross, and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He is gone before thee, carrying his cross; and He died for thee upon the cross, that thou mayest also bear thy cross and love to die on the cross. Because if thou die with Him thou shalt also live with Him; and if thou art his companion in suffering thou shalt also be his companion in glory. Behold, in the

cross all doth consist and all lieth in our dying; and there is no other way to life and to true interior peace but the way of the holy cross and daily mortification. Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross."

There are a countless number of persons, known to God alone, who will attain eternal life and happiness only by the road of suffering, and who will have just reason to repeat with overflowing gratitude the words of the Royal Psalmist: "*Bonum mihi quia humiliasti me*"—"It is good for me, O Lord, that Thou hast humbled me."* It is only thus that our eyes are opened to our danger, and that we turn back in time to the path of righteousness.

The afflictions which God sends us, and which we bear with patience and resignation to his blessed will, are far more powerful to cleanse us from sin, to expiate our past offences, and to acquire most precious merits than any amount of penances or mortifications of our own seeking. Whenever, therefore, we are besieged by

* Ps. cxviii. 71.

temptations, subjected to great trials, or oppressed with heavy sorrows, we should take refuge atthe foot of the cross, and there seek comfort, grace, and strength.

One day, when St. Thomas Aquinas, "the Angel of the Schools," was visiting the holy Bonaventure, he begged the latter to show him his library, whence he drew such stores of learning for his beautiful works. St. Bonaventure, by way of answer, pointed to his crucifix, worn with his tears and kisses, and thus intimated the source of all his knowledge.

The cross of Christ should be the chief book of all Christians, and the more they study it the more they will love it, and the more they love it the better will they practise what it teaches; for it is a power unto salvation for all who, with strong faith and confidence, press it lovingly to their hearts.

IN CRUCE SALUS.

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